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GNOSIS AND THE QUESTION OF THOUGHT IN VEDĀNTA

Dialogue with the Foundations

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PREFACE

It would probably be generally admitted that Vedānta is the apex of the Indian (or Eastern) religious philosophies. Yet today it commands so little attention, in part, no doubt, because the modern mood in scholarship refuses anchoring and centering of thought.

The present work seeks to address modern thought though not in the modern mood. It is nevertheless motivated by the belief that there are times when the timeless is most timely.

It is possible that the sources of a tradition such as Vedānta, if approached properly, will yield something which can be brought within the ambience of the contemporary philosophical quest, at least of its still largely unmanifest undercurrents. The present work is intended to be an act, imperfect as it is, in that direction. That marks the difference of this project, called *Gnosis and the Question of Thought in Vedānta*, from customary studies in Indology.

The term "gnosis" as employed in this context is a translation of its cognate Sanskrit term *jñāna*, the latter, however, having a much wider range of meaning than the former, especially in view of the latter's appropriation for a specific usage by the Gnostic traditions of both the East and the West. In the general expression of Vedānta too the Gnostic understanding of *jñāna* has undoubtedly persisted especially in the so-called *jñāna-mārga*, or "way of gnosis", made popular from early medieval times on. However, in this present work we seek to return to the original meaning of *jñāna* (or gnosis, as we shall refer to it, using the Greek-Western cognate) – inasmuch as it prevails in the foundational texts of Vedānta, with which we shall hold dialogue. Accordingly, we see gnosis as ground of philosophical thought. This character of gnosis has, as often as not, remained hidden behind a veil. The task that is set before us, as understood in this present work, is to become witnesses of gnosis disclosing itself as the ground of thought, that is, of thought as such, to become witnesses of a great tradition

opening its hand and letting us see that distinctively human thing it has been holding. In the past, Vedānta like other Eastern traditions has been approached from the customary standpoints of mystical contemplation, scholastic disputations and life-wisdoms. While none of these standpoints is called into question, it is maintained by us that the other standpoint – of thought as such – must not remain under eclipse, inasmuch as it alone makes philosophy.

That thought is inexchangeable with anything else, even with contemplation, not to say with methods of disputations or with psycho-metaphysical techniques, that it is without another to take its place, that while it is the sum of our questions and of answers to those questions, the sum of both our doubts and beliefs, of both our inability and ability to know, it is nonetheless something more is the truth to which that paramount phenomenon which we call philosophy has testified again and again. The same testimony also tells us that thought is also much more than any expression it has ever been given. It is the clarity with which we hear this that sends us to a tradition which silently promises to show us the highest ground from which thought may arise, without at the same time distorting the fact that what arises from that ground is still what opens itself to us as thought rather than something else.

It is for the sake of investigating the possibility, and with it the nature, of thought that may arise out of the ground which is gnosis that the fundamental texts of Vedānta have been approached. A word may be said about the unmistakable similarity between this investigation and Martin Heidegger's probing dialogue with the Greek sources of Western philosophy: in fact the latter has served as an inspiring model for our task. However, there is also a point of departure – one among several – for while Heidegger seizes thought in its historicality, with a view to letting thought unfold its destiny in its concealment in the present, no such effort is made in respect of thought that has its ground in gnosis, for there we are outside historicality altogether vis-à-vis thought. And yet it is recognized that the kind of dialogue which Heidegger held with the sources that lie in Greek antiquity has shown us the way of productively holding a dialogue with Vedāntic foundations. And, moreover, we come to know that despite the difference on account of historicality, in the thought that has its ground in gnosis (Vedānta) there is nevertheless an unfolding that has absolute and compelling significance for the present.

Now about the word "present", let it be said, lest there by any false anticipation, that it is used in this context merely in a general sense, marking our universal situation in respect of both thought and existence, without having any intention of saying anything about the present, presentness and thought and their relation to one another which are so much a part of Heidegger's investigations, even when they have to do with the Greek sources. Neither Vedānta nor any other Eastern tradition had any part in bringing us to the standpoint that underlies the word "present", the decisiveness and inescapability of which, however, are what have acted as our impetus to turn to a tradition such as Vedānta in order to see how its gnosis serves as the ground of thought, and how it may respond to the present. We add that insofar as Vedānta (or any other non-Western tradition) had no part in delivering us to where we are, both in thought and in existence, it will have to speak essentially from the outside. And that freedom it has is not bad, as long as it is not accompanied by the claim of possessing an ability to deliver us *from* the present – and such claims are invariably attended by total misunderstanding of what the present entails for both good and bad and of what lies behind the present. However, Vedānta's adherence to gnosis and its implications of the eternal extended to thought has an absolute and compelling significance for the present, that is, in the general sense of where we are both in thought and existence. And moreover, another side of Vedānta – its kinship with the Greek tradition in respect of Logos (*Vāk*) – will show its surprising ability to be apprehended by Western thought, which is so profoundly shaped by the Greek Logos. This side of Vedānta has invariably been missed in the past because of the predisposition on the part of writers to see it within the general context of what is called vaguely Eastern Philosophy. An effort is being made in this work to redress this, as it will be evident. Vedāntic Logos is not Greek but it has deep affinities and dissimilarities with the Greek, which are what make it an alternative and at the same time a complement.

It is clear that the task envisaged in this work is to take a first, essential step in showing how gnosis as enshrined in Vedānta is ground of thought à la philosophy, undertaken through a dialogue with the foundational texts and them only. Further steps may indeed by taken once this one holds, and upon its basis deeper dialogue with the West is also possible. Strangely enough, an earlier book by the author, *Religion as Anxiety and Tranquility: An*

Essay in Comparative Phenomenology of the Spirit, will also be a beneficiary, in retrospect.

Lastly, in respect of acknowledging what the author owes and to whom, the people to be mentioned are: his wife, Protima, whose gift of entering with deep understanding into the author's mind is an abiding source of strength to him; Mrs. Ross (Grace) Gordon, the senior secretary of his department, who has painstakingly and with perceptive care brought the manuscript up to a fit state – not to omit the many students whom he has had the privilege to teach and to guide over the years.

Now, there is the matter of acknowledging material quoted from other books. However, by far the vast majority of quotations are from ancient or medieval Indian texts which, like all such things, are the possession of the world; as for the translations of those, they are my own. In addition, there are just a very few citations from modern Western philosophical works. Accordingly, passages from:

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A Clarification with Regard to Capital or Small First Letters of Some Terms

The reader will, no doubt, observe such a variation especially in the case of certain Sanskrit terms. The explanation is that when the thing itself is mentioned, that is, wherever warranted, the first letter will be in capitals, whereas when it is the term that is mentioned the first letter will be small. Any other kind of such variation is explained in the text itself, wherever it occurs.

INTRODUCTION

GNOSIS AND THE SCOPE OF PHILOSOPHIZING IN VEDĀNTA

What follows is an account of Vedānta, undertaken with a view to exploring the nature of philosophical thought in that tradition, and simultaneously of exploring the scope of philosophizing it offers. It is needful and it is useful for us to philosophize, particularly in our spiritually dangerous times. And we can philosophize fruitfully only by turning to the store-houses of wisdom preserved in our great traditions. We must indeed think for ourselves but when we do so in the most genuine way, that is, free from egoism and conceit and most of all without being hindered by that most binding shackle of all, namely, the assumption that the thinking that we do is somehow ours while we do the thinking *for* all, it will become clear to us that we are not alone in this and that we are not left without witnesses to what we strive after.

We turn to these store-houses of wisdom, paying heed in equal measure to their own character and to their vogue in the traditions of man, on the one hand, and, on the other, to the way we turn to them. There then takes place an interplay between these two, and that is what will decisively enable us to seize these store-houses of wisdom as philosophy.

In the pages to follow what we aim to show is precisely such an interplay *vis-à-vis* the Vedāntic tradition. That which comes into a philosophizing purview and which we can seize as such is philosophy. Is Vedānta philosophy? Or more generally, is there such a thing as Eastern philosophy? Although for more than a century, that is since the West's introduction into Eastern wisdoms, scholars have been writing books on Vedāntic and other Eastern "philosophies", these questions have been hanging in the background. Surely, orientalist scholars could not have been expected to await an answer to these, and so they have freely and uninhibitedly exercised their privilege in speaking of the systems of Eastern wisdom as "philosophy". However, great modern philosophers of the West – not just scholars – like G.W.F. Hegel and Martin Heidegger,[1] by

telling us that philosophy is only Western, have forced us to think the matter over again and more carefully. In trying to demonstrate that there are some Eastern traditions which can claim the name philosophy we are not laying that claim on their behalf in the precise respects in which these great philosophers have denied it to them but in a more special manner, that is to say, by trying to show that these traditions have properties which make it possible, and even necessary, for us to seize them as philosophy. Heidegger in his well-known lecture published under the title *What is Philosophy*? (*Was ist das – die Philosophie*?) undertakes a penetrating investigation of the genesis and career of philosophy. Within the strict limits of that masterly investigation there is decidedly no room left for any such thing as a non-Western "philosophy". To quote:

> The word *philosophia* tells us that philosophy is something which, first of all, determines the existence of the Greek world. Not only that – *philosophia* also determines the innermost basic features of our Western-European history. The often heard expression 'Western-European philosophy' is, in truth, a tautology.[2]

But the question today is, ought we not to surpass these limits and grasp other traditions and by philosophizing and – insofar as they enable us to do so – bring them into a philosophizing purview through an interplay? The question can also be turned around: ought we not to do this in order to be able to philosophize in a new and unlimited way? [Heidegger's definition of the verb 'to philosophize' is apt: it means "to enter *into* philosophy, to tarry it in, to conduct ourselves in its manner."][3]

The task that we are about to undertake has these questions as its background, although its aim is not just furnishing an answer to them. Our undertaking here will be only in respect of Vedānta but we will give an account of it in terms of the question of its scope of philosophizing. Hence it is obvious that ours is going to be different from all other accounts in not being either historical or merely expository, or apologetical for that matter. Rather, it will be a hermeneutical one. But what actually do we mean by "hermeneutics"? Basically, it is the same as what we mean by interplay, but one in which the interpreted subject-matter, what the interpreter brings with him and the means of interpretation all fuse into one single, homogeneous philosophical activity. The means of interpretation must be called by the name "dialogue".

We, therefore, must undertake our task by means of a dialogue with the Vedānta tradition. The dialogue will have to be with the texts and with the thinkers, actually with the thinking of the thinkers. Does not all this sound, at least initially, rather rhetorical? Can we really *talk* with the texts and with the thinkers of the past? In order to answer these questions we must first of all grasp the nature of the talk involved here. Let us begin with a kind of talk we make in our everyday life for an approach to the understanding of this other talk. Thus, if we look deeply enough into what transpires in our ordinary life, we can easily see that we do commune with Nature, with beings in our environment and with symbols of reality, both far and near. Actually, it is this communion, despite all its interruptions and hindrances, that makes us persons, by letting personhood surface to the region of our conscious life. At the next level, that is, if we are to understand Nature, our environment and the symbols of reality far and near, we must look upon them as events to be grasped so that by grasping them we visualize a sphere of Meaning (or at least meanings and patterns). We can go to further levels from here but from then on the everyday experience itself becomes the ground for perception at greater depth. One has several choices here, as one may turn to art, poetry, science or history, and in all these hermeneutics is necessary. The artist, the poet, the scientist and the historian choose different events (e.g., the physical, psychic, psychophysical, chemical, biochemical, astronomical, human or historical) with which to commune, and choose different modes of communion. They are all, however, pushed over into another dimension where thought must transcend the given framework of ordinary human interaction and discourse. The dimension is transpersonal, which is what in the last resort ensures the possibility of all *personal* communication.

In philosophy, the dialogue with text and thinkers of the past is philosophical dialogue. The texts as well as what the thinkers have spoken (or thought) are the events with which we have to commune. As Heidegger states, "This mutual talking of what always anew peculiarly concerns philosophers as being the Same, that is talking, *legein* in the sense of *dialegesthai* (conversing) is talking as dialogue."[4] Further, "it is one thing to determine and describe the opinions of philosophers. It is an entirely different thing to talk through with them, and that means that of which they speak".[5] In philosophy there is this peculiarity: the events which constitute

the texts and the thought of the thinkers (together forming the subject-matter), with which dialogue is to take place, are not the reality that philosophy and philosophizing essentially are all about. In speaking with the texts and the thinkers we can only speak of that of which they themselves speak and not *with* it – and as a matter of fact neither could they. So then, in taking this route of dialogue with them, i.e., with the events of the texts and of the thinkers' thinking, we will be observing an attitude of circumspection towards that which philosophy and philosophizing are all about (be it predicated on "Being" or "Ultimate Reality").

For the dialogue with the Vedānta tradition the texts chosen will have to be the central ones, which are, in the universal verdict of the tradition itself, the *Ṛg Veda*, the Upaniṣads, the *Bhagavadgītā* and the *Brahma Sūtra*, the last three together in a special way being called the *prasthāna-traya*, or triple foundation. These texts present certain events, which we must correctly describe as knowledge-events, and are accordingly not to be taken as either temporal or personal. The responses to the demand for hermeneutics of these knowledge-events were already made primordially within the texts themselves and in later epochs by the thinkers who are called *ācaryas*, through whose thinking the events have passed to us so that they may be seized as philosophy by being brought into the philosophizing purview in our day.

What is the philosophizing purview that we have in mind? We may put it initially as that which is a genuine outcome of the knowledge-events of the Vedānta texts and of the thinking of the Vedānta thinkers which can address itself to us as thought, and no more and no less. The above statement (which is, however, not yet a description) will show that what we are setting about to do is different from the two customary expressions of Vedānta, i.e., as an elaborate and intricate logico-metaphysical structure and as a profound mysticism.

In order, however, to obviate any misunderstanding, let us affirm in the clearest terms possible that the value and validity of these two above-mentioned expressions are by no means called into question. On the contrary, we proceed on the assumption that they are absolutely integral to Vedānta (as also to other, allied traditions). Further, we must also take note of the striking fact that these two expressions in most Asian traditions are not only inter-related but lean on each other, enhancing each other. And as for Vedānta especially, the precision and subtlety of its

categories in both respects are utterly stunning even as sheer feats of conceptual and analytical virtuosity and speculative power. Traditionally, however, it is the mysticism of Vedānta (and of other Eastern systems) which has held the imagination of the West – and that is still true. The logico-metaphysical structure has also engaged the attention of many notable and astute scholars of the West. These two expressions still merit the highest consideration.

In our present treatise we not only do not avoid the logico-metaphysical structure and the mysticism of Vedānta but actually observe them and treat them as the irremovable and essential background of what we strive for, and draw inspiration from them. It is only that the exploration of the nature of philosophizing is not considered the same as speaking about either of them separately or together.

THAT WHICH PHILOSOPHY AND PHILOSOPHYZING ARE ABOUT AND THE THOUGHT WICH PERTAINS TO IT

A few pages back we spoke of an attitude of circumspection towards that which philosophy and philosophizing are all about, and we observed in parenthesis that it may be predicated on "Being" or "Ultimate Reality". In fact, it can be just as legitimately predicated on other terms, for instance, "the Good". But the demonstration of such possibilities brings no profit. However, this circumspection is not something we learn naturally but only in the context of dialogue with philosophical traditions or with traditions that can be seized as philosophical in the actual philosophizing. Nor has this circumspection anything to do with agnosticism and scepticism, they being its very opposite. For in fact, rather than denying the prospect of thought attaining what it sets out to attain, it reinforces it by making the task hopeful. Therefore, dialogue with traditions conduces to the deepening and maturing of philosophical thought.

Before we proceed any further we must re-capitulate the sense of what was just stated above by clearly defining philosophical thought as that thought which pertains to what philosophy and philosophizing are about (predicated on such terms as "Being" and "Ultimate Reality"). And then we can see that there are three

ways in which the task of philosophical thought, as defined above, is approached. And the three approaches, far from being exclusive of one another, may actually support one another and must eventually be seen as belonging together. The dialogue with the traditions will enable us to perceive them all distinctly. Hence we may speak of philosophical thought in the following three ways: (I) as approached from human consciousness as the ground; (II) as approached from the correspondence of being to Being (or Ultimate Reality) as the ground; and (III) as approached from (what for the want of a more appropriate word we shall call) gnosis as the ground. Let us try to analyse these three below.

I. THOUGHT AS APPROACHED FROM HUMAN CONSCIOUSNESS AS THE GROUND

Our own consciousness is what every one of us has access to and what has potential access to everyone and everything. There is a primordial operation of consciousness as a consequence of its interaction with what it encounters as reality, first of all the world itself, both in its determinate and indeterminate aspects. In this interaction consciousness clearly engages with itself as well. In this way all reality becomes phenomena in the primary sense, namely, of their own shining (the word phenomenon, Greek *phainomenon*, having derived from the stem *pha* – Sanskrit cognate *bhā* –, to shine) and showing themselves. But the primary sense right away ushers in a secondary sense, namely, that of seeming, because in showing itself reality does not show itself *as* itself. Therefore, it is seen as though through a veil that conceals it from consciousness, that is to say, it becomes an "appearance". And the more consciousness encounters it the more impenetrable becomes the veil of appearance which sets it off from the underlying reality.[6]

Here consciousness finds itself pushed over into a new dimension of encounter with reality, and that we know as wonder. Although wonder is a universal experience, sometimes and in certain cases it becomes a shock that puts consciousness on the road to thinking. It is that kind of wonder carrying a shock with it that the Greeks called *thaumasein* or astonishment (or amazement). We are told by both Plato and Aristotle that astonishment is the origin

(ārchē) of philosophy. Plato writes: "For this is especially the *pathos* of a philosopher, to be astonished, for there is no other origin of philosophy than this", (*Theatetus* 155d).[7] And likewise Aristotle: "For through astonishment men have begun to philosophize both in our times and in the beginning", (*Metaphysics* A2, 982b, 125q).[8] Martin Heidegger explains Plato's and Aristotle's statements to the effect that astonishment is not to be treated as just the beginning of philosophy in a mere historical sense but that it is its perpetual origin all the way. Thus he clarifies:

> It would be very superficial and, above all, very un-Greek, if Plato and Aristotle are only determining that astonishment is cause (*Ursache*) of philosophizing. If they were of this opinion, that would mean that at some time or other men were astonished. Impelled by this astonishment, they began to philosophize. As soon as philosophy was in progress, astonishment became superfluous as a propelling force so that it disappeared. It could disappear since it was only an impetus. However, astonishment is *ārchē* – it pervades every step of philosophy.[9]

Now, if this powerful shock of wonder, i.e., astonishment, attends us every step of the way as it stimulates thought pertaining to what philosophy and philosophizing are about, we must try to see how this thought operates. Here we will outline it in the following manner. This is only a description of the way we think even when we do not know that we think. And hence it is not a prescription. We can only call that thinking thinking in the philosophical sense when it becomes aware of itself. And we will also notice that the natural prospect of thinking has no end as it is always at its painful beginning. But the prospect of achieving self-conscious clarity as to what natural thinking is is also a process that automatically advances it. And this too is made possible by wonder called astonishment, which also characterizes our own natural thinking. Thus we see some natural paths of thought, three of which (the main ones) will be outlined below.

Firstly, *thought as the penetration of the hidden depths of reality.* In respect of this, thought incorporates both intuition and imagination. The problematic posed by the reality (i.e., *Ultimate* Reality) of all that appears to consciousness is the reason for thought's attempt to penetrate to what is hidden. It is not the absence of intuition into such reality as comes before consciousness but its very presence that sets thought on this path, for the intuition

itself brings the problem. Whatever is intuited as essence is such only in a doubtful sense and the abstractions (concepts) drawn from intuitions add to the doubtfulness. Therefore, the mind spontaneously and freely goes to work to fill the gap with imagination. As Edmand Husserl observes, "conceptual construction certainly takes place spontaneously and free fancy likewise, and what is spontaneously produced is of course a product of the mind."[10] Imagination itself is not reliable because it is fancy, but what is imagined may either be a mere creature of that fancy or it may be a still hidden reality which while refusing to yield itself to intuition may yet be doing so, although falsely through fancy. But in either case, that is, whether what is imagined is a mere product of fancy or a reality which only reveals itself through it, the shock of wonder, namely astonishment, continues to urge thought to go further. This is another and deeper than usual sense in which astonishment must be said to pervade every step of philosophy.

However, in the very interest of thought going further in penetrating reality, there is need to secure the intuitions (or concepts) to some solid base. That entails two corollaries: (a) shifting of the intuitions as between true and false; (b) structuring of those that are determined as true through the use of proportional relations. As to the first, the true intuitions are those that will bear the light of repeated examination as possibilities under all conceivable conditions and will stand up without being falsified in the respects in which they are supposed to be true. They are the ones that have the potentiality to be principles in the service of coherent theoretical explanations which can be erected on them. It is here that the ideal laws of identity, non-contradiction and excluded middle present themselves. As to the second i.e., structuring of true intuitions through the use of proportional relations, the supreme forms of it are analogy, the assignment of right properties to right substances, and lastly, the deduction of general properties from the combination of two or more individual properties (or rather sets of properties) and in that way the induction of unintuited substances. The same proportional relations are used in communication, i.e., in the transaction that takes place between speaking and understanding as well as in the transference of knowledge gained through intuition.

In both these corollaries i.e., shifting of intuitions as true from false, and the structuring of the true through proportional relations, a deeper *ratio*, or Reason, is involved as they are not found

to be self-grounded. And this deeper *ratio*, or Reason, is common to both.

Secondly, *thought as the act of boundary-making for coping with the boundless.*

This takes place at the terminus of intuition and even of imagination. This is the free flight in which thought has nowhere forward to go and hence recoils to where it started from. Even imagined realities are only landmarks which the mind can set up with its freely constructed images. So like a free-flying bird, the mind returns because there is nothing upon which to light, and merely reports the immensity of what has driven it back home. But whenever thought returns, like the homing pigeon, where it started from becomes the boundary. This behaviour of thought is simply acting in obedience to the intrinsic need of the mind to sustain itself. But it does report about the ungraspable immensity beyond the boundary, and in fact doing so is the real gain achieved by its return. Ultimate Reality is, therefore, not something about which anything definite can be reported except that it always lies beyond any boundary that thought can reach. The boundary itself is that, to use the description of the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, "whence speech, along with mind, returns without reaching (what is still beyond the boundary)".[11] What thought reports (through speech) is merely what is at the edge of the immensity seen from our side, i.e., at the boundary from which it recoils. But insofar as the boundary is of thought's own making and as such it calls it ultimate, it acts as a positive and firm ground that informs it with the power to find its way back as well as to report that there is a beyond. This ground is Reason which is invoked in both the sifting of intuitions and in the structuring of them, as already discussed above.

Thirdly, *thought as the penetration of the otherness inherent in phenomena.*

This is really complementary to the first path of thought we described, i.e., thought as the penetration of the hidden depths of reality, but it is approached from a different angle. Some phenomena have a built in otherness, while others do not. However, in naming all phenomena by their particularities there is a direct negation of otherness. Hence when we say 'here', the "here" means not "there" or anywhere else, and vice-versa. Likewise in respect of 'this' and 'that'; 'now' and 'then', etc., etc. But such is

not the case with phenomena like time, life and being, and contrariwise, eternity, death and non-being.

Time and eternity are, by definition, opposites of each other. But time cannot be thought without that inherent otherness, i.e., eternity, nor can eternity be thought without and apart from time. But even so, paradoxically enough, in thinking either of them it is necessary to contrast it with an inherent other, which by definition is its opposite, however in the same respect. The inherence of eternity in time is revealed by the fact that time's beginning and end cannot be contemplated or conceived, which means that its otherness is the governing condition of its being thought and that, however, is manifestly absent. Therefore it is evident that the absence of something in something else (in the same respect) is not antithetical to its inherence as a notion. But then before we lay it down like this, we should consider some theoretical ways in which time has been approached either with an eye to eternity or without it. In none of these ways what we speak of as the inherent otherness between time and eternity that governs our thinking and the necessity to think them together seem to be recognized. Thus one view of time depicts it as pure momentariness with no reference to eternity. Another view is based on duration, with which we are supposed to wrest time's essence and thereby recover its own essential being. According to yet another view, time and eternity intersect in some higher mystical or metaphysical experience, which is therefore called "eternal now". There are many more. No doubt, each has its own strength. But we are not talking about solutions but about the problem itself. But the problem persists not only in respect of time and eternity but also in respect of life and death, being and non-being, and of many other pairs. Now, because there are these problems and also precisely because there are no real solutions to any one of them, there are *many* different solutions. And therefore, the natural paths of thought keep on moving forward, never coming to an end.

Now, over against this approach to what philosophy and philosophizing are about (with its natural paths), proceeding as it does from human consciousness as the ground, we must outline the other two approaches (i.e., from the correspondence of being to Being, and from gnosis respectively', which are marked out by the definiteness of their understanding of the subject-matter.

II. THOUGHT AS APPROACHED FROM THE CORRESPONDENCE OF BEING TO BEING AS THE GROUND

This approach is a definite path, and it has been most clearly adumbrated in the writings of Martin Heidegger. [Heidegger has to be taken most seriously because he writes not on his behalf only but on that of the whole tradition coming down from the Greeks. Besides, he tells us that this is what is to be understood by *philosophy*.]

Raising the question "What is philosophy?" he observes [marking the definiteness of the path] : "the first thing for us to do is to lead the question to a *clearly directed path,*[12] so that we do not flounder around in either convenient or haphazard conceptions of philosophy."[13] "[This] tradition which bears the Greek name *philosophia,* and which is labelled for us with the historical word *philosophia,* reveals the direction of a path on which we ask, 'What is philosophy?' "[14] "We must then ourselves, through our thinking, go to meet philosophy on the path it is travelling. Our speaking must co-respond to that which addresses the philosophers. If this co-responding is successful to us then in the true sense of the word, we respond to the question, 'What is philosophy?' "[15] Then, explaining the identity of meaning between "to respond" (German, *ent-sprechen* and "to answer to" (German, *antworten*), he adds, "The answer is not a reply (*n'est pas une response*), the answer is rather the co-respondence (*la correspondance*) which responds to the Being of being".[16]

> In such a correspondence we listen from the very outset to that which philosophy has already said to us, *philosophy*, that is, *philosophia* understood in the Greek sense. That is why we attain correspondence, that is, an answer to our question, only when we remain in conversation with that to which the tradition of philosophy delivers us, that is, liberates us. We find the answer to the question, "What is Philosophy?", not through conversing with that which has been handed down to us as the Being of being.[17]

This path is not a break with philosophy in its history but is an adoption and transformation of what has been handed down to us, in other words, destruction (*Destruktion*, perhaps meaning destructuring.) "Destruction means to open our ears, to make ourselves free for what speaks to us in tradition as the Being of being. By listening to this interpellation we attain the correspondence."[18]

The wide-ranging scope of philosophy is already trimmed to the dimensions of the conduit pipe of the correspondence of being to Being. The natural paths of thought as characterizing that wide-ranging scope of philosophy is exhibited in Heidegger's exposition in "the unfolding attitude specifically adopted by us" towards the natural correspondence of being to Being that constitutes our nature.

> Are we, humans, not always already in such a correspondence with the Being of being, and, what is more, not only *de facto* but by virtue of our nature? Does not this correspondence constitute the fundamental trait of our nature? This is indeed the case. [But] although we do remain always and everywhere in correspondence to the Being of being, we nevertheless, rarely pay attention to the appeal of Being. The correspondence to the Being of being does, to be sure, always remain our abode. But only at times does it become an unfolding attitude specifically adopted by us. Only when this happens do we really correspond to that which concerns philosophy which is on the way towards the Being of being.[19]

The achieving of such correspondence through philosophical thinking is what Heidegger calls attunement (*Gestimmtheit* or disposition),[20] or tuned correspondence (*gestimmte Entsprechen*).[21] Philosophy being understood thus, there is no chance of surrendering thinking to "the accidental changes and vacillations of sentiments." "It is rather a question of pointing out that every precision of language is grounded in a disposition (*Disposition*) of correspondence, I say, in heeding the appeal."[22] This "essential disposition of correspondence" (*die wesenhafte Gestimmtheit des Entsprechens* = essential attunement of correspondence), Heidegger wants to show, is not a modern invention. So he writes, "The Greek thinkers, Plato and Aristotle, already drew attention to the fact that philosophy and philosophizing belong in the dimension of man which we call tuning (in the sense of tuning and attunement)."[23]

The astonishment (*thaumasein*) which is the *ārchē* of philosophy is here shown to be something distinct from what the word appears to us ordinarily [and hence distinct from what is appropriated by the natural paths of thought such as we have demonstrated to proceed from the ground of human consciousness]. Accordingly, "Astonishment is the tuning within which the Greek philosophers were granted the correspondence to the Being of being."[24]

At this point we must go back to where Heidegger has already

explained to us the very meaning of philosophy, it having to do in its genesis with the *sophon*, which Heraclitus had expressed as "One (is) all" (*Hen panta*). It is explained that "All" stands for the whole, the totality of beings, while "one" stands for Being. "The *sophon* says all being is in Being. To put it more pointedly – being *is* Being".[25] The verb *is* (which, however, is only implicit in Heraclitus' own formula) is only transitive and means approximately "gathered together" (*versammelt*). "Being gathers being together insofar as it is being. Being is the gathering together – *Logos*."[26] "[And yet it is] just this fact that being is gathered together in Being, that in the appearance of Being being appears that astonished the Greeks and them alone. Being [small b] – that became the most astonishing thing for the Greeks."[27]

The *sophon* exhibits this unity or correspondence between being and Being. From the *sophon* apparently Heraclitus coined the phrase *aner philosophos* (*hos philei to sophon*, he who loves the *sophon*). The word *philein* (loving) expresses the *harmonia* between Being and being, and that is its distinctive feature in the Heraclitean sense. And this is the correspondence. In the speaking of the *Logos* this correspondence is expressed, and speaking in the way of the *Logos* (that is, *homolegein*) is the speaking of the *sophon*-loving man. [Heidegger further shows that philosophy (*philosophia*) came in the efforts (of Socrates and Plato) to "rescue and protect the astonishing thing" from others' attacks. The *harmonia* became a yearning (*orexis*) and a striving for the *sophon*. "And the striving is determined by *Eros*."]

The whole of Western philosophy (which for Heidegger is the whole of philosophy) is the continuation of what the Greeks called *epistēmē theoretikē* (speculative knowledge), that is to say, a kind of competence or skill (*epistēmē tis*), which is capable of being on the lookout for this very *harmonia* (in different ways at different epochs) and of seizing it in its glance and of holding it.[28] Heidegger would not deny that philosophy has changed in the more than two thousand years of its history. He observes: "At the same time we ought not, however, to overlook the fact that philosophy from Aristotle to Nietzsche, precisely because of these changes throughout their course, has remained the same. For transformations are the warranty for the kinship in the same."[29]

It is significant that Heidegger, who is probably the greatest philosophical student of the history of Western philosophy, has not only exposed the main thrust of that history (as different ways of

tuning being to Being in different epochs), but has also acted as its greatest critic (both constructive and destructive), pointing to a possibility of thinking beyond it, which may also have been there before it took to the course it did. But the way towards that goal lies through philosophy. For no doubt, the criticism of philosophy with a view to finding a path of thought beyond it (and behind it) is also a philosophizing act, for one must still speak the language of what one must overcome.[30] The course on which Western philosophy had been destined to travel right up to the present, producing as one of its logical products modern technology itself with its calculative thinking, Heidegger argues, was set by Plato. So from Plato to Aristotle, to the Middle Ages, to Descartes, to German idealism, and further to Nietzsche, on the one hand, and to technology, on the other, the path has been the same. What persists through all these, he shows, is the self-giving of Being in different ways. The path, he considers fate-laden (*geschicklich*, different from *geschichtlich*, or historical). So he demonstrates how Western philosophy has been travelling along a fateful path. Now, although it was Plato who gave a decisive orientation to this path, it was in a sense already there even from Anaximander onwards. Heidegger speaks of the "fate-enmeshed formulations" along the path such as "*physis, logos, hen, idea, energeia*, substantiality, objectivity, subjectivity, Will, Will to power, Will to Will."[31]

The decisive direction of this path is in the understanding of truth. In its Greek origin *a-letheia* (truth) meant the self-unconcealment of Being through all the concealments (i.e., of beings). Plato, Heidegger argues, subjected truth to *idea* (related to the infinitive *idein*, to see or view). Truth thus became a matter of correct view, wherein was laid the ground for the secondary notion of truth as *adequatio rei ad intellectum*. This, he shows, is the beginning of metaphysics, which is a man-centred approach to Being. And thus thought in philosophy, although it still remains – and always has – the tuning of being to Being, in its fateful course it became – and has remained – something that man does in respect of Being rather than what Being does in respect of man. [This is the ground of his criticism against humanism.]

Thought has remained bound by this not-yet challenged ordinance, which has hitherto precluded a deeper way of tuning being to Being. Heidegger shows an approach to thinking wherein that deeper way unfolds itself. Hence Heidegger's approach to thought has been described as an overcoming of metaphysics or more

broadly as philosophical overcoming of philosophy (i.e., as understood in its fate-laden sense prevailing hitherto in the West). All the critical work of Heidegger *vis-à-vis* the history of Western philosophy has been most beautifully characterized by H.G. Gadamer thus: "Heidegger attempted to take the step backward and in so doing take the step forward as well, a step which will allow modern civilization to realize the limits of Greek thought, of *alētheia* and its formative power." And then Gadamer adds this (for us) significant statement: "It may be that by virtue of this a dialogue has become possible with philosophical traditions which have developed outside these limits if they learn to free themselves from any tendency to parallel Western thought."[32]

III. THOUGHT AS APPROACHED FROM GNOSIS AS THE GROUND

We have discussed two of the three grounds from which to approach thought. A third remains, namely gnosis. Fundamentally, it is akin to the second, i.e., the tuning of being to Being, in that it cannot be discussed abstractly but only in terms of some concrete spiritual history. The second ground as we have seen, is known to us only in the concrete spiritual phenomenon of Western philosophy, which by definition is philosophy as such. The spiritual history where we are able to encounter gnosis is somewhat wider in its distribution and occurrence. But while it has disappeared from most of the traditions of the world, it is still remarkably preserved in Vedānta as well as in traditions that have kinship with it. And it is undoubtedly in Vedānta, in view of its unequivocal clarity in the matter, that we can seek in gnosis a distinct ground of the thought which it is possible to seize as philosophy, although doing so, no doubt, is problematical.

The difficulty in treating gnosis as having anything to do with philosophical thought does not come from the first ground we have dealt with (and the natural paths of thought that emerge from it) as it can, in this respect, be simply neutral. But the correspondence of being to Being, and gnosis are both definite and distinct grounds, each in its own way. To put them together is a problem. While from the one whichever way we move we are always in thought in the sense of philosophy, the picture is far from

clear in respect of the other. Does gnosis really generate thought in the philosophically seizable sense? That is the question.

The answer to this question can be "yes", if we resolve to understand gnosis as that which is the ground of thought, that is to say, within the framework of the universally applicable ontological question as to thought, i.e. thought in respect of its pure being, rather than outside it. There is, for sure, a tautologous ring to this statement but that will cease when we realize that the question always outruns any framework we can advance, confining thought to its philosophical manifestation such as is evident in our own procedure here, till *it comes to rest in what we may describe as the disposition of Being (or Ultimate Reality) itself*, a disposition which is towards us. *Whether we should call this disposition thought or something else, of which thought itself is an extension, is a moot question*. However, in those traditions which regard it as something else it is called gnosis, and thought itself must then be taken as extension of gnosis and also as receptivity to it, rather than extension of Being as such and receptivity to Being.

The difference must seem trivial and merely verbal till we realize that in gnosis there is no concealment in its unconcealment as there would be in thought that understands itself as direct receptivity to Being. But gnosis appears, and in its appearing the possibility of thought comes to pass – of all thought. Now that we are talking about concealment and unconcealment we have reached the point at which we must consider darkness and light, which are the most fundamental notions in philosophy, although not universally recognized.

In the ordinary, everyday thinking, even as technical philosophy, darkness and light are merely sequential conditions which qualify our knowledge of specific objects of inquiry. Through various kinds of reasoning, experiment, etc., our state of darkness pertaining to objects is replaced by a state of their illumination. As is the scope of the objects in question so is the scope of darkness and light. But if objects themselves are to be viewed as ultimate, the laws affecting the natural paths of thought that we described (i.e., as penetration of the hidden depths of reality, boundary-making for the boundless and penetration of the otherness inherent in phenomena) will all apply.

In deeper thinking, where Being itself is what is thought, it is no longer the simple sequentiality of darkness and light but a profound relatedness between them that is most significantly at work.

And there is no question but that this is what makes philosophical thought profound, insofar as it has always got to do with Being. And this has been well demonstrated by the history of Western philosophy, especially where the question of Being has stirred it from the depth.

In gnosis, by contrast, there is neither sequentiality of darkness and light nor their relatedness, for there is only light. This is what distinguishes gnosis. *The light that is gnosis is the pure effulgence of Ultimate Reality.*

Gnosis, nevertheless, provokes thought. However, far from replacing or rendering irrelevant all other kinds of thinking, it acts as the ground for reviewing them in its own light. It provides a background of illumination in which to place all our previous questions while enabling us to see why there should have been questions at all, why Being itself is such as it is and not otherwise, that is to say, why it generates thinking (and wonder itself).

Gnosis enables thought always to move *in* knowledge, and for this movement there is no limit at all. Thought, therefore, is nothing but realization. *Realization is the limitless possibility of gnosis that is given over to thought.* The possibility is limitless because it is grounded in the truth that the *Real is the Real*, such self-identity being the only abiding warranty for thought. It also counterposits the ceaseless, epochal shifting of the ground of thought, especially of the profound thought which through the inter-relatedness of darkness and light seeks Being. Therefore, in the limitless scope of thought's moving *in* knowledge there is no place or need for shifting the ground.

Gnosis places thought right inside the truth that the Real is the Real, and is oriented in the direction of realizing that it is so, and hence of realizing that thought's own being is dependent on it. Obversely, if it were not for thought to realize it, there would not be the proposition that the Real is the Real.

However, the proposition that the Real is the Real can be stated in two fundamentally different ways. One way to do so is to give it the form "x = x", *x* standing for any entity or any number, but there is nothing in it to *realize* by thought. It is simply a law – that of identity – that arises in the sifting of the intuitions as between true and false [such as we discussed in the context of a corollary to one of the natural paths of thought, i.e., the penetration of the hidden depths of reality]. The law of identity clearly serves an important need in logic but it arises not because anybody

seriously questions the self-identity of things and numbers – not at all. Now we move on to the second way of saying, the Real is the Real, which is the way grounded in gnosis. Here this proposition describes thought's project in motion. *Realization* is the name given to that project and it belongs with the *Real* in the first occurrence of the word in the proposition as well as in the second. But there is a distance between the two occurrences and that distance is the challenge that gnosis places before thought, bestowing upon it also its grace, whereby thought is enabled to move *in* knowledge, and, as we have said, there is no limit for this movement.

This movement of thought, viz., realization, is undoubtedly a creative one, but not in the sense of production. Nothing is produced and not the least knowledge. The Real is there already; the self-effulgence of the Real, viz., gnosis is, therefore, there already. What is there thus is called *self-obtained* (*svataḥ-siddha*), not something *to be obtained (sādhya)* as the result of production. That is the highest creative movement of thought which is not production and is not burdened by considerations of it, and hence in the most genuine sense free.

Creativity of thought is the playing out of the meaning of the proposition, the Real is the Real, in all the highways of thought, including those that are natural and those that have been opened especially by the philosophy grounded in the tuning of being to Being. Thus it does not disclaim anything, neither analogy nor predication nor presupposition, and not the least correspondence of being to Being, and yet it is not ruled by anything because the Real is criterionless.

By playing out the meaning of the proposition that the Real is the Real, all things become lucid and the *why* and *wherefore* of such baffling mysteries as agnosis (*ajñāna*), both universal and individual, sorrow (*duḥkha*) etc., became self-explicated. They come to be grasped as belonging to the purposiveness implicit in the proposition that the Real is the Real. And as there is no other execution of its purpose than the playing out of its meaning, thought is lifted above the realm of becoming and history, without, nevertheless, its losing touch with them.

This, then, is the way thought is approached from gnosis as the ground, and the Vedānta tradition offers the paramount example of it. There is, however, no reason to believe that this approach is the exclusive perogative of that tradition or that it would have

been impossible without it. But it has its distinctiveness, which is that it has given us a body of texts followed by a whole tradition of reflective thinking based on those texts. Vedānta above all is *mīmāṁsā*, that is to say, a system of well-guided, thoughtful reflections upon the texts, or a scheme of exegesis, on the basis of which it is possible to play out the meaning of the essence of the texts, i.e., that the Real is the Real. That the Real is the Real is the outcome of learning about the Real from the texts. And how do we learn this from the texts and from nothing else in place of it, and how is it that we do not learn this in the same manner from other sources? These questions are answered by the nature of the texts insofar as they beckon us to turn to them for knowledge. The texts themselves are not something which could have been produced if they were not already there on their own. They are, however, something to which we can turn because they are already there on their own.

That the Real has a name is also what we learn from the texts. The name is *brahman* and it is both the fullness of meaning and the start of the explication thereof at one and the same time. [But the name is not a particular name, for there is not a particular person or a particular being that answers to it.] The word '*real*' (like its Sanskrit equivalent *sat* or *satya*) is not a name, as it is simply thought's word like many other words. It is not different from "goodness"', "happiness", "love", etc., which are not names but only verbal designations for what is *to be known, to be had*. They are thought's words. Although a name, *brahman* is not like other names, and further it belongs with gnosis. It is a peculiar name, drawn out of the Vedic religious history and cannot have full meaning outside its context. Such a name is a camouflage for the sake of discouraging those who approach it indifferently. [By contrast, that which has subsequently been used as a synonym for the name *brahman*, viz., *ātman* is not a name, but a word, generally like *soul*, which thought drew out of human experience. In this respect it is not different in its origin from such a word as '*real*'. As a matter of fact, insofar as *Brahman* became identified with *ātman* (*Ātman*), we must understand that identity as the original, and still Vedic, way of saying that the Real is the Real.]

Nevertheless, for thought's sake *brahman* has to be translated as Reality or Being, for then only can we have the proposition that the Real is the Real, which sets thought on its way. But translation itself, far from giving up the fullness of meaning that the name

carries, is but the first step towards realization. In fact the translation is both provocation of thought and, obversely, responsiveness to the thought provoked – both carried out in the texts themselves *ab origine*.

So in order to round off this Introduction we must return to what was stated at the beginning as the nature of the work that is set forth in these pages: a dialogue with the texts and the thinkers who have spoken (or thought) in the tradition of the texts. To quote a statement made then: "The texts as well as what the thinkers have spoken (or thought) are the events with which we have to commune." Also: "In speaking with the texts and the thinkers we can only speak of that which they themselves have spoken and not *with* it – and as a matter of fact neither could they." This pertains to what we have described as observing "an attitude of circumspection towards that which philosophy and philosophizing are all about (be it predicated on "Being" or "Ultimate Reality".)

Now, in respect of giving an account of Vedānta as philosophy we have begun to discover how it can be seized as philosophy by being brought into the philosophizing purview. In this respect there is no question but that ways have to be found for Vedānta itself to come into the purview of all that can be called philosophy, not only by coming into their proximity but also by both stirring, and being stirred by, them.

It is Vedānta's consistent and clear-cut exposition of gnosis as the ground of thought that makes it peculiarly relevant for philosophy, in view of the fact that that ground has been completely eclipsed and lost sight of in modern times, thanks to the radical turns that philosophy has taken especially since Kant. But this historical situation is only peripheral to advancing that which is timeless. However, it is also the timeliness of the timeless that calls for Vedānta to be seized as philosophy, for which there is only one way, namely that of letting its depths be searched anew as ground of thought in an age in which such a search is most needful and most useful. The seizing of Vedānta will serve as a catalyst for all that is akin to it to collect around it.

Hence we propose to search for the nature of philosophical thought in Vedānta in the following pages. Our search will be restricted to a particular block of time and philosophical events, from the *Ṛg Veda* to Śankara's writings, through the Upaniṣads, the *Bhagavadgītā* and the *Brahma-Sūtra*. Why this block and this

only? The reason is that it represents a complete line as far as the foundation-laying career and the formation of the Vedāntic philosophy of gnosis are concerned. The texts themselves are a mixture of gnosis expressed through language and of human thought already provoked by gnosis. But the human thought in the texts by no means stands apart from gnosis, which is the reason why from the beginning the texts include the hermeneutics of gnosis. However, while thought by its very nature changes, gnosis does not, because it is above the transitional modes that govern the relation among yesterday, today and tomorrow. Therefore, thought which has its ground in gnosis manifests this changelessness through its very changes, and does not seek to make either yesterday or today or tomorrow the absolute point from which to view all processes.

Śankara himself is the great culminating point of this gnosis tradition. The post-Śankara scholars of the Śankara line, no doubt, developed fine points of argument and speculation with incredible skill. And this development is not at all superfluous as it embodies Vedānta's scholasticism, and there has been such a rich harvest to be reaped from what has been sown even in this respect between the *Ṛg Veda* and Śankara. And there has been gnosis mysticism too going on side by side, often in the same scholastic tradition, no doubt undergirded by Yoga methods. But now in our undertaking we search for the nature of the philosophical thought in a different way from the scholastic tradition, in respect of the ground that stretches from the *Ṛg Veda* to Śankara, such as we have already described.

It has already been implicitly clear – if someone should raise such a question – why we have not included non-Śankarite, Vedāntic writers, who came after Śankara, like Rāmānuja, Maddhva, Vallabha and Nimbarka? The answer will be implicit in the very fact that we have restricted ourselves to searching for the nature of philosophical thought by pursuing the line which culminates in Śankara as far as the tradition is concerned, in what Śankara himself defines in a breathtakingly simple way as "the vision of the truth (or thatness) of the Ultimate Essence in which is no distinction of knowledge, known and knower" (*jñāna-jñeya-jñātṛ-bhedarahitam paramārtha-tattva darśanam*)[33]. That which issues in this vision must be seized as philosophy in the philosophizing purview which opens itself before us. [In Indian writings today the Sanskrit word for vision, i.e., *darśana*, which is like *theorea* in meaning, is used as a translation for 'philosophy'.] In

this practice, however, only the intention is good, and the practice is also justifiable because there is no other word. However, vision is not philosophy, for only that which is seized in thought is justly entitled to be called philosophy. On the other hand, insofar as the vision can be seized as philosophy it is philosophy, in the sense that in being seized it becomes philosophy, that is to say, becomes capable of being thought and needing to be thought.

In the following pages we will take up the four basic texts (and the thought of Śankara, which is really an extension and culmination of the texts themselves) as the complete line of the gnosis philosophy of Vedānta. We will consider how gnosis provokes and directs thought and how gnosis and the vision it goes in hand with can be seized as philosophy. This is the task to which we are addressing ourselves.

One final word must be said about the essential religious character of the tradition, as otherwise the picture will not be complete. The texts are, above all else, religious both in their origin and primary use. When it is said that their origin is religious it is meant that the unavoidable historical and human agencies through which they have come do not constitute their essence, as they are rather extraneous to religion. When it is said that their primary use is religious it is meant that they serve the ends of the ultimate liberation of the soul. That this is such cannot be doubted. But insofar as gnosis is looked upon as the way to liberation a predisposition to regard thought as merely transitional is generated, undercutting the realization of the inner destiny of thought itself as the very extension of gnosis, which is what is being attempted to be shown here in this work.

It is not at all warrantable to deny the essential religious character of these texts, origin and primary use included. But without in any way denying it, we recognize the fact that thought extends its domain so as to embrace what is essentially religious both in origin and primary usage. This is as much an ordinance of religion as of thought (insofar as it still recognizes its ground in gnosis) and therein the twain are no longer separate. The ordinance really comes from gnosis. Here even the question of liberation becomes no longer detachable from the wholeness to which gnosis summons thought and, reversely, thought becomes no longer detachable from the question of liberation. Here all artificiality must come to an end, for what is to be realized is *that* the Real is the Real in all possible ways, which is philosophy's manner of putting

us in a position to realize the Real *as* the Real – and nothing more may be asked of philosophy than that it put us in such a position.

CHAPTER I

GNOSIS AND PHILOSOPHICAL THOUGHT IN THE ṚG VEDA

THE TEXT OF THE *ṚG VEDA*

[For our hermeneutics of the *Ṛg Veda* we have found some of the ways in which Heidegger approaches the pre-Socratic Greeks to be useful. Yet the significant difference between what Heidegger seeks – and seems to find – and the Vedāntic tradition requires us to put gnosis rather than Being itself as the ground of thought. The use of gnosis clearly also safe-guards that which is essential to thought in respect of Ultimate Reality.]

Gnosis unveiled in the tradition of Vedānta had its beginnings in the Vedas. That is the apparent reason why the word *vedānta*, meaning end, consummation or essence, of the Veda, came to be coined. It is this connection that makes an encounter with the core of all the Vedas, i.e., the *Ṛg Veda*, necessary.

Undoubtedly, the *Ṛg Veda* can be approached, and has been approached, in modern as well as ancient times from perspectives other than that of Vedānta. But it is clear that in a study such as ours which has taken Vedānta as the standpoint for its perspective there is no place for any other approach. And besides, it is not the case that Vedānta stands as a sentinel forbidding another kind of entry into the Vedas, for those who are impelled to enter them through other gates may indeed do so. However, if it becomes clear that the Vedas had been preparing for the Vedāntic gnosis to be fully spoken, along with the essence of that gnosis, i.e., *Braham*, then the choice of this path will have been automatically justified.

The objectives in inquiring about an ancient and remote text can obviously be various. For us, however, there is only one objective, namely, that of raising the question of thought, in the sense of the thought that has to do with the investigation of Ultimate Reality. There again, whether or not we already understand such thought to be approached from the ground of gnosis makes

all the difference. In the light of the Vedāntic tradition that is the only understanding possible. Therefore, our hermeneutics of the *Ṛg Veda* is also intrinsically the hermeneutics of the approach to thought from the ground of gnosis. And accordingly, it cannot be a wide ranging study of the text of the *Ṛg Veda* (as also of the subsequent texts) for all kinds of purposes and for the satisfaction of all kinds of curiosities, legitimate as they all may be in their own way. Between what is outlined here and existing studies on the *Ṛg Veda*, there is no significant point of contact and so we join no debate with them. When we study the text we unceasingly ask ourselves questions about gnosis itself and about thought approached from gnosis as the ground.

It is because the text and our thought have the same common ground of gnosis that hermeneutics is possible. And through hermeneutics we come to recognize this common ground. It is, therefore, a means of discovery. That is how we are enabled to know what the text says and that is the way we know our own thinking and hear the text speak to us from within ourselves.

Ultimate Reality always remains the supreme subject-matter of philosophical thought, and the study of the text is undertaken as a circumspect way of thinking about it, that is to say, both as guiding and as being guided by such thinking. The Vedāntic tradition with its definite understanding of thought takes control of our thinking by letting it express itself in terms of gnosis.

Vedānta places such thought in an already flowing stream, which, according to it, begins with the Vedas. It understands itself as the essence of that stream. The critical examination of this self-understanding is important enough but is, nevertheless, peripheral to a greater undertaking of thought, namely, that of bringing it to the orbit of the question of Ultimate Reality in terms of the gnosis that Vedānta sets forth.

The objective of seizing the Vedic text as philosophy has to be achieved by a continuing dialogue with it. In fact, such a dialogue has gone on from the end sections of the *Rg Veda* and the other Vedas themselves, i.e., the Upanisads, which in turn became the texts to be seized as philosophical by the thinkers who came in the period subsequent to the Vedas but standing in their stream. The continuity of this dialogue is interminable and we too are placed in the stream. It is correct to say of the Vedas that they not only manifest the common ground that our thinking has with them, i.e., gnosis, but are also beginnings of all Indian investiga-

tions in the historical sense. Our concern with the Vedas, however, is not in the respect that they are historical beginnings but in the respect that they hold the *origin*, which is the common ground our thinking has with them.

There is much speaking in the Vedas, no doubt, but their essence consists as much in what they say as in what they withhold. The Upaniṣads and the subsequent Vedāntic tradition as dialogues with the Vedas brought out what was said as well as what was significantly not said. The statements that Heidegger makes with respect to the dialogue with the texts which hold the origin of Western thought is entirely applicable here.

> Every interpretation is a dialogue with the work, and with the saying (i.e., the original). However, every dialogue becomes halting and fruitless if it confines itself obdurately to nothing but what is directly said – rather than the speakers involve with each other in *that* realm and abode about which they are speaking, and lead each other to it. Such involvement is the soul of dialogue. It leads the speakers into the unspoken.[1]

Our task, then, calls for us to have dialogue with the *Ṛg Veda* in this comprehensive sense. However, what is not said is not separable from what is said as they are not distinct from each other. To *see* what is not spoken, by hearing the words spoken, is the essential understanding of meaning. And to *show* through speaking is the essence of communication. That is how the Vedas work.

THE VEDA AND THE VEDAS: THE VEDA MEANING IDEA

First, let us look at the word *veda* and find out what it means. The word is cognate with *vidyā*, another noun from the common root, *vid*. However, the same word-sound, *vid*, functions as five different roots, from which come five different verbs with their own meanings or rather meaning-clusters and, accordingly, with distinct conjugations and also derivations. These are *vid*, to know or to see; *vid*, to happen or to be in existence; *vid*, to get or obtain, or to find, or to feel; *vid*, to discuss or consider; *vid*, to feel, to tell, to dwell.[2] [This situation of the same word-sound functioning as different roots for words of different meanings is a common feature of Sanskrit.] The *Dhātupāṭha* xxiv, 56 gives *vid*, to know, as the

first root, from which in conjugation arises the verb *vetti*, meaning he, she or it knows. The other roots, however, do not at all seem unrelated to *vid*, to know. Heidegger shows some parallels in Greek, for instance λέγειν, which means at one time "to lay" and at another "to tell". Even though the situation in Greek vis-à-vis λέγειν is as complex as similar situations in Sanskrit, Heidegger's remark is illuminating: "We ask: what is it that takes place when λέγειν means both 'to lay' and 'to tell'? Is it only by accident that these meanings come together under the common roof of the same word-sound? Or is there something else? Could it be that that which is the essence of telling, that which is called λέγειν has come to light as a laying"?[3] Surely, we cannot but wonder whether such seemingly diverse meanings as to know, to see, to happen, to be in existence, to consider, to feel, to tell, and to dwell, are not bound together at some great depth, from which different roots (like roots of plants and trees) issue forth, the depth being that which gives rise to all language, i.e., consciousness. Now to speak of the root *vid*, to know or to see, it is clearly related to Greek εἰδεῖν, Latin *videre*, German *wissen* and old English *wot*.

As for the text, it is correct to say, surprising as it may seem, that there is no such book as *the* Veda in the accurate sense of that word, for there are only particular books like *Ṛg Veda, Yajur Veda, Sāma Veda* and *Atharva Veda*. At the same time Veda is a name for all the Vedas as well as their parts. That the Veda (singular, not collective, usage) is eternal (*nitya*) and not composed by man or god (i.e., *apauruṣeya*) is an accepted belief in the Vedic-Vedāntic tradition. That characterization does not unequivocally apply to the actual books. What it really points to is *the* Veda in the sense of the IDEA (all letters capital, in order to distinguish it from *idea* in the sense of form). The equation, Veda = IDEA, is also well justified by the cognate roots *vid* and εἰδειν, from which the two words respectively come. This Veda or IDEA may be taken in the sense of gnosis, meaning the disposition towards us of Ultimate Reality.

The Veda is, however, also the word or *Logos* (*Vāk*, or *Śabda*) and the Veda being eternal the word too is eternal. Thus Śankara, in re-affirming the insights of his pre-cursors, Jaimini and Bādarāyaṇa, that the Veda is eternal, states that the word of the Veda too must be taken as eternal, insofar as it is the origin of all things: "And thus, it is because the world consisting of conditioned forms such as the gods have proceeded from the word of the Veda that

the word of the Veda also should be understood as eternal".[4] And he cites support from the earliest (i.e., Mantra) portion of the *Ṛg Veda*, 10.71.3: "They achieved through holy sacrifice perfect progress in the understanding of *Vāk*."[5] The Veda, the IDEA, is eternal – but eternal in the sense that it belongs with the Absolute which houses the cosmic becoming, *not in the sense of belonging with the Absolute which is still beyond that.*

In sequel to the afore-mentioned statement, Śankara moves from speaking of the Veda in the singular to speaking of the Vedas in the plural. There, appealing to earlier texts, he observes: "The seers with the permission of the Self-born (*svayambhu*) through their *self-energizing intellectual penance* (*tapas*) obtained the *Vedas along with the epics* (*Vedān setihāsān*) at the end of the previous epoch". This most significant transition from the singular to the plural is invariably missed by scholars and translators. The truth is, it is the IDEA which houses the archetypal forms that serves as the basis for the recurrent production of the cosmos at the beginning of each cyle. And it would be absurd to imagine that it is the actual, individual Vedas, namely, the *Ṛg Veda*, etc., which serve as that basis.

In the mythological works, the eternal Veda, the IDEA, was depicted in terms of a notion that is appropriate for them, that is to say, as a praeter-historical entity, conforming to an *ab-original* vision of time. Accordingly, these works speak of an entity which actually existed in the mythological past. We call it *praeter-historical* because its existence is conceived in the model of things of history, yet not historical in the concrete sense. And we cannot very well call it *pre-historical* as that would bring it within the scope of actual history. The *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* and the *Matsya Purāṇa*, both much later in composition than the Vedas (i.e., the *Ṛg Veda*, etc.), speak of such a praeter-historical Veda, which branched out into the four collected texts or *Saṁhitās*, accompanied eventually by a drastic reduction in size. The original is said to have been perfect unlike the ones which have come in history, i.e., our Vedas, which are described as very imperfect. No doubt, this account reflects the general view of the Purāṇic mythologies, according to which the golden age lay in some praeter-historical antiquity, history itself being a degeneration or winding down to an inevitable catastrophic anticlimax, while all along the road of time there lie the scattered wreckages of original unities and perfections. As in everything else, divine intervention takes place here in order to

salvage the broken fragments of the original text for such preservation of *dharma* and of man as is possible. According to the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* that one Veda of the golden past was a "vast tree, which soon branched out into an extensive forest".[6] It is said to have had one hundred thousand stanzas, arranged into four collections by Vyāsa (literally, the arranger).

Of the Vedas which has existed in history, and exist today, only the first three – *Ṛg Veda, Yajur Veda* and *Sāma Veda* – were originally recognized. The *Atharva Veda* was recknoned as Veda somewhat later in time. The Vedic texts themselves speak of the Vedas (plural) as having been born, along with the rest of creation. Thus, out of the sacrifice and dismembering of the primoridial cosmic person, or *Puruṣa*, by the gods, it is stated in the *Ṛg Veda* (10.90. 9), there arose, along with the celestial bodies, terrestrial creatures and social classes, the *Ṛg Veda, Sāma Veda, Metres* (*Chandas*) and *Yajur Veda*. This is echoed in the *Upaniṣads* also. For instance, the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* at its very outset, meditating on the symbol of the horse-sacrifice, uses the same model as in the above *Ṛg Vedic* passage, but substituting *Vāk* for sacrifice (*Yajña*) and *Ātman* (Self) for *Puruṣa* (primeval person). The issuing forth of the three Vedas along with other texts is also described here. Though they are not the same as the IDEA or Veda in the transcendent sense, they are, it is maintained, earthly manifestations of its *logos*.

References to the Veda always must be understood in the often equivocal way they are made. That which is spoken of in the metaphysical sense and those that are described as books or compositions are nevertheless connected by virtue of the metaphysical relation between what is transcendent and its earthly manifestation. Of the latter we must and can speak in terms of the religious history of the Vedic people, but without ever confusing them with the transcendent Veda.

Now to turn to the Vedas of the Vedic religious history, that is the *Ṛg Veda*, etc., they were originally priestly manuals. First there were three, and then four, classes of priests performing diverse functions in a common sacerdotal religion. Sāyaṇa and Yāska quote the *Ṛg Vedic* verse (10.71.11):

> *ṛcām tvaḥ poṣamāste pupuṣvān gāyatram tvo gāyate śakvarīṣu brahmā tvo vadati jātavidyām yajñasya mātrām vimimīti u tvaḥ.*

(One brings together the verses. Another sings the *gāyatra* in *śakvarī* metres; another, i.e. Brāhman, narrates the wisdom pertaining to the origins of things; and yet another determines the rules of sacrificial rites.) The four classes are *Hotṛ, Udgātṛ, Brāhman* and *Adhvaryu*. Paul Deussen's account[7] of the functions of the four classes of priests follows the traditional information and his description of the priests (*ṛtvij*) and their relation to the four Vedas is, therefore, well founded. The complete collection of the verses (*ṛcā*) is the *Ṛg Veda* or more correctly *Ṛg Veda Saṁhitā*. The ordered selection of the same, rendered into melody, along with some extra melodies, constituting a psalter, became the *Sāma Veda Saṁhitā*. Likewise, a different anthology of the same verses, cemented together with sentences appropriate for different liturgical acts, formed the *Yajur Veda Saṁhitā*. For simplicity's sake we name the three collections or *Saṁhitās* as *the Book of (sacred) Verses, the Book of Psalms* and *the Book of Rites*. But the core in all the three is always the verses, that is to say the *Ṛg Veda*. We may assume that the narration of the origins of things, though special, is embedded in the *Ṛg Veda Saṁhitā* and never became a separate collection. That means there was no special *Saṁhitā* assigned to the Brahman priest.

The *Atharva Veda*, is a completely different story. It had an independent origin and was later added to the list of the Vedas as the fourth. Although portions of it are deeply speculative, much of its contents are charms and spells (*atharva-angīrasa*), for which reason it was held at a great distance from the original three. It was not admitted for sacred rites. That fact is stated exactly so: *atharva vedastu yajña-anupayuktaḥ, śānti-pauṣṭika-abhicārādi karma-pratipādakatvena atyanta-vilakṣaṇa eva.*

At this point we must take into consideration the division of the four Vedas into sequential parts. Although the parts are four, i.e., Mantras, Brāhmaṇas, Āraṇyakas and Upaniṣads, the traditional authorities usually comprehend the latter three under the general designation of *Brāhmaṇa*. Thus, the *Āpastamba-Yajña-paribhāṣā Sūtra* states: "*mantra-brāhmaṇayor veda nāmadheyam*" (the Mantras and Brāhmaṇas are together called *Veda*).[8] [However, it must be noted that this formal division is not always maintained, for instance, one of the Upaniṣads, the *Īśā*, is not appended to any brāhmaṇa but is part of one of the two variants of the *Yajurvedic* Mantra corpus, namely the *Vājasaneyī Saṁhitā*.]

Now, we adopt the traditional, and very justified, view that the

Ṛg Vedic Mantras are pre-eminent. Therefore, we must restrict ourselves to them, and we shall concentrate on them.

ṚG VEDIC MANTRAS

The *Ṛg Veda* is the Veda of *ṛks*. Sāyaṇa, following Yāska, says "*ṛk* is parise" (*ṛk arcanī iti*). The word *ṛk* expresses the same meaning as the word *arcanī* (*arcanī ityamūm ṛkśabda ācaṣṭe*). The word *ṛk* may be translated "(sacred) verse". There are 10,473 *ṛks* comprehended by 1,017 *sūktas* or hymns, arranged into 10 *maṇḍalas* or books.[9] The word *mantra*, according to Yāska, comes from *manana*, to think, (*mananāt mantra*).[10] The precise meaning of this word is thinking, in the same sense of being mindful of, or taking to heart. The praise of the gods (i.e., *devastuti*) is the way of mindfulness of, or taking to heart, something which is at once said by the praise and at the same time left unsaid. That something is seen by the *ṛṣis*, who, therefore, are the seers. The Mantras are the contents, which overflow the containers, namely, the *ṛks* and the hymns (*sūktas*) which they constitute. Hence the Mantras, as Sāyaṇa says, were seen by the *ṛṣis*, not made, *ṛṣiṇā dṛṣṭam na tu kṛtam*. And, therefore, the *ṛṣis* are seers of the Mantras, *ṛṣayo mantra-draṣṭāraḥ*. As to the puzzling notion of "seeing" the Mantras, a modern explanation is available in one of the passing statements that Heidegger makes: "Can we see something told?" Then he answers, "We can provided what is told is more than just the sound of words, provided the seeing is more than just the seeing with the eyes of the body. Accordingly, the transposition of the leap of such a vision does not happen by itself. Leap and vision require long, slow preparation, especially if we have to transpose ourselves to *that* word, which is not just one word among many."[11] Sāyaṇa explains: "Because by virtue of the energy from the infinitely withdrawn transcendental brooding (*tapasā*) they see the Mantras, a *ṛṣi* is so called –that is the definition", and adds, "One should understand the word *ṛṣi* to mean the seer of the Mantras by supernal knowledge, and that is the reason why it is said in the tradition that the *ṛṣis* are the seers of the Mantras."[12]

The Mantras are the corpus of the overflowing contents of *ṛks*, of what is both said and not said by them, and, therefore,

phenomenally embody the transcendent Veda, or IDEA, which in being *seen*, spontaneously and of its own accord extends itself into the sphere of human thought but at the same time protects itself and its votary, the thinker, from the all too common vicissitudes of human thought. [It is because of this protection that the Mantras are also called by the name *chandas*, from the root *chad*, to protect or cover, – *chādanāt chandas* – according to the etymologists like Yāska.] The Mantras, therefore, are the source of the wisdom, in which is the mindfulness, or taking to heart, of that which extends itself into thought and which thought welcomes and receives.

The Mantras are what are put into words by the seers in a mode of language which is most appropriate for them as what were seen. That mode of language combines the essence of all other modes of speech and yet negates them, insofar as it is the union of saying and not saying. This is called *stuti*, eulogy or praise, and is held to be identical in meaning with the word *mantra* itself[13] insofar as the latter can be taken as a mode of speech. The characteristic of this kind of speaking is that there is no interval between it and the seeing, for the two are the same. On the other hand, their unity pervades the highest kind of awareness to which man has access. It is the essential language of man inasmuch as he is that being which is destined to be more than man and inasmuch as he is already open to that possibility. By the same token, it is this kind of speaking that makes that possibility come home to him. In it is housed man's ability to think that which deserves to be thought, and it bears witness to that ability. Also, whichever way we go about it, the gaining of true language is the indispensable condition that ensures the prospect of thinking, but it remains always a prospect, and only a prospect. And as far for the language of *stuti*, or eulogy, it is an indictment upon other modes of speech – and therefore of other things which put forth their claim to be thought. Yet, insofar as it is always a prospect it permits and even generates other modes of speech, i.e., placed between the two boundaries, one of them being the objectifying kind of speech where language functions as a system of representational signs and symbols of reality, or in other words, truths in the propositional sense, i.e., awaiting conformation, and the other being ecstatic utterances struggling to express ineffable experiences.

Outwardly, *mantras* are sung in praise of the deities. For instance, mark these passages: "May we (or, let us), O ye gods, recite

that *mantra* fearless and felicity-conferring", (*tamidvocema vidadheṣu śambhuvam mantram devā anehasam*).[14] [The expression *tamidvocema*, may we or let us recite, in 1.41.6 (and occurring also in 1.174.1 and 2.35.2) conveys no sense of obligation as it rather signifies a self-impelling activity (of speaking)]. "Offer a *mantra* that is not mean but well-arranged and exquisite", (*mantram akharvam sudhitam śupeśasam dadhāta yajñiyeṣu*).[15] Sometimes the gods themselves are the singers. "Now Bṛhaspati utters the *mantra* of praise, wherein the gods Indra, Varuṇa, Mitra and Aryamān have made their abode", (*pranūnam bṛhaspati mantram vadati ukthyam yasmin indra varuṇa mitra aryamā devā okāmṣi cakrire*).[16] It is also to be noted that *mantra* as the supreme form of speech is also the dwelling place of the deities. Further, it is that on which people must (or, actually do) set their thoughts as it is the light by which to walk: "the people have set their thoughts on this thy (i.e., the god's), *mantra*", (*mantra ye vāram naryā atakṣan*)[17]; "By hearing the *mantra* we walk", (*mantra śrutyām carāmasi*).[18]

Now, the primordial association between *stuti* and thinking, although it may seem strange and unlikely, is worth pausing over a little. We could never have known that possibility had not Heidegger shown how in the West *thinking* and thanking had a deep connection. That connection was found out by following the scent of language. We discover that the same way of scenting language (*Vāk*) is possible in respect of the Vedas too and our nose can lead us to where the connection lies. And we come to know that in this respect *mantra* is thinking and that *stuti*, in spite of the inane sound of the word by which we translate it (i.e., praise, or eulogy), is thanking. It is simply amazing that two traditions, which have followed quite different paths, have so much in common where some profound matters are involved. Heidegger asks: "What is it that is named with the words 'think', 'thinking', 'thought'? Towards what sphere of the spoken word do they direct us? A thought – where is it, where does it go"? And then he explicates, "The Old English *thencan*, to think, and *thancian*, to thank, are closely related; the Old English noun for thought is *thanc* or *thonc* – a grateful thought, and the expression of such a thought; today it survives in the plural *thanks*. The '*thanc*', that which is thought, the thought, implies the thanks."[19] Heidegger grants that the assonances between 'thinking' and 'thanking' are perhaps superficial and contrived – at least might seem to be so at

first sight. But the impression will change when we move into what we call "memory" and try to understand it as the real connection:

> [But] the word 'the *thanc*' does not mean only what we call a man's disposition or heart, and whose essential nature we can hardly fathom. Both memory and thanks move and have their being in the *thanc*. 'Memory' initially did not at all mean the power to recall. The word designates the whole disposition in the sense of a steadfast, intimate concentration upon the things that essentially speak to us in every thoughtful meditation. Originally, 'memory' means as much as devotion: a constant concentrated abiding with something – not just with something that has passed, but in the same way with what is present and with what may come.[20]

All this is quite illuminating for the understanding of the Vedas. The sanskrit word *smaraṇa*, from *smar* to remember, is even today used in the above sense of memory. [It is distinguishable from *smṛti*, an objectified form of account retained as an aid to thinking, used officially as designation for certain classes of post-Vedic scriptures.] Heidegger further remarks: "Our attempt to indicate what the words 'thinking', 'thought' and 'memory' say might serve to point at least vaguely towards the realm of speech from whose unspoken sphere those words initially speak. Those words bring to light situations whose essential unity of nature our eyes cannot yet pierce."[21] Again, "pure thanks is rather that we simply think – think what is really and solely given, what is there to be thought".[22] [However, a caution with respect to following through the application of Heidegger's exposition to the Vedas and all that comes from the Vedas, must be pronounced. Thus where, as Heidegger continues on, he develops the idea of "original thanking" as "the thanks owed for being" we feel it is appropriate to substitute *gnosis* for *being*, which would certainly be the case in the discipline of Vedānta.]

In the *Vedas* we notice that *mantra* is what calls thinking. The thinking that is thus called is realized in a unique and exemplary manner in the Upaniṣads. The call is provocation, or more properly *in-vocation*, of thought. In fact, the call of the *mantra* is invocation of the wisdom which it itself is. The *Ṛg Veda* says: "With *mantra* we in-voke, from within, Agni the wise one" (*mantrair agnim kaviḥ achā vadāmi*).[23] This usage has doubtless been at the root of the coined word *ā-mantraṇa*, from *ā-mantṛ*, to *invite, invoke*, call, call forth or address, occurring already in the *Atharva*

Veda, some Brahmaṇas and later in the *Mahābhārata*, etc. The verbal forms of it are found in the Upaniṣads. One occurrence in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (2.1.15) is most striking in that it is an address made to a sleeping person, suggesting awakening from sleep as symbolic of the objective of *āmantraṇa* (address), and thus demonstrating what it means to think. Ajātaśatru and Gārgya, two great thinkers, are the principals in an anecdote which says: "The two together came to a person who was asleep. They address him (*tam āmantrayām cakre*) by these names: 'O great King, dweller in the white region (*bṛhan puṇḍara-vāsaḥ rājann iti*)'. He did not wake up till Ajātaśatru rubbed him with his hand." [A slightly altered version of this appears in *Kauṣītaki Upaniṣad* (4.19)]. The verb *āmantṛ* is also used in the sense of calling out, asking a question. Satyakāma (a name, which literally means desirer of truth) called out asking (*āmantrayām cakre*) his mother: "I would become a student of sacred knowledge, of what family am I?" (*Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, 4.4.1).

Heidegger's discussion of the Greek *κελέυειν*, to call, can throw much light on the word *āmantṛ* as well. He points to the sense in which a verbal form of that Greek infinitive is found in the older Greek version of the New Testament passage, Matthew 8.18: "Idōn de ho Iēsous ochḷon peri auton ekeleusen apelthein eis to peran – Seeing a large crowd around him he (Jesus) called to them to go to the other side." Upon this Heidegger comments: "[And] the old word "to call" means not so much a command as a letting-reach, that therefore the call has an assonance of helpfulness and compliance, is shown by the fact that the same word in Sanskrit still means to 'invite'".[24] This is indeed a most arresting observation, although it is not clear what word in Sanskrit Heidegger had in mind. But we know that the most appropriate ones would be *āmantṛ, hve* and *āhve*, all of which are very old and all of which correspond to the Greek *κελευειν*.

The word *mantra* also passed into some of the later sectarian traditions in a conspicuous way. It went through a rather tangential development in the Tāntric tradition, where it acquired the meaning of evoking or invoking some hidden, spiritual (or occult) power by employing cryptic formulas and esoteric techniques. Sir John Woodroffe, an eminent Western authority on Tāntrism writes: "The subject (of *Mantra*) is of such importance in the Tantras that their other name is Mantra Śāstra (Science of Mantra). But what is Mantra? Commonly orientalists and others de-

scribe Mantra as 'Prayer', 'Formulas of Worship', 'Mystic Syllable' and so forth. These are but the superficialities of those who do not know the subject."[25] He argues in a manner consistent with that tradition that the practice of *mantra* has to do with the hidden spiritual power (*śakti*) behind the cosmos, and is a technique for the realization of the unity with the cosmos, and finally with the Reality behind it. Accordingly, the derivation of the word in the tāntric tradition is from the first syllable of the two words *manana*, meditation, and *trāṇa*, liberation.[26] However, it is not possible to find support for such techniques in the Vedic Mantras. The sectarian tradition of gnosis, like all sectarian traditions, is a deviation from thought. This we can see when we understand that the call to thought that the Mantras are leads us to what they are the telling of. Here we are, no doubt, confronted by so-called Vedic mythology, which scholars as a rule assume centres around the gods named in the Vedas.

The telling by the Mantras (i.e. Vedic telling) is, in fact, itself the myth. The gods are merely accessories to the telling. As for myth, the telling, we can learn from Heiddegger again, who writes: "Myth means the telling word. For the Greeks to tell means to lay bare and to make appear – both the appearance and that which has its essence in the appearance, its epiphany. *Mythos* is what has its essence in the telling – what is apparent in the unconcealedness of its appeal. The *mythos* is that appeal of foremost and radical concern to human beings which make man think of what appears, what is in being."[27]

The purpose of the telling, of the *mythos*, is to point to its essence, i.e., gnosis. Accordingly, the telling itself invites, calls forth, thought and there is nothing esoteric or occult in it, and there is no tale. This is the essential character of Vedic myth. This is the line that divides the Vedas from all mythological literature, even of India, as they are all accounts of the transactions of men and gods, reflecting their folly or wisdom and their final encounter with a transcendent law as well as the mystery of fate.

As for the gods of the Vedas, *telling is the region of their dwelling*. The *Bṛhaddevatā*, an ancient commentary, (ii. 88) states: "He who tells the sentence, therein occurs the Seer – *ṛṣi*; he who is told by the sentence, therein occurs the deity," (*saṁvedaṣvāha vākyam yaḥ sa tu tasmin bhavedṛṣi, yastenocyeta vākyena devatā tatra sā bhavet*). The elementary constituent in the telling is the name (*nāma*). [Name here has nothing to do with the devotional

repetition of the divine names familiar in many religions.] What then is name, ontologically? According to the *Amarakośa* (Dictionary of Synonyms),[28] name means the following things: *ākhyā*, or that primary constitution of a thing by which it is cognized in its objective existence; *āhvā*, or that particular sound-form by which a particular being is addressed; *abhidhāna*, or naming; *nāmadheya*, or mere name (nominal entity). Unless the name depends on the reality of the named, it will be a mere name. If the name moves away from the original reality that appears in the sense of its own self-shining, i.e., as *phenomenon*, it tends to stand for that which has its essence only in the appearance. Hence the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (6.4.1,2,3, and 4) speaks in a refrain with respect to all modifications which have their essence only in the appearance: "They have their origin in the logos; they are mere names", (*vācārambhaṇaṁ vikāro nāmadheyam*). If the name does not stand for that which has its essence in the mere appearance, then it is a legitimate accessory in the telling. The semantic tradition says *artho abhidheya*, i.e., the name is the essence or meaning, insofar as we seek to locate a reality in the essence or meaning underlying name. [The *Amaraṭīkā*, which contains this clue gives three other definitions for meaning. They are *vastu*, or real property; *prayojana*, or use; *nivṛtti*, or deliverance.]

The gods as named have a Nature basis. But this is not the same as to say that they are so-called personifications of "the powers of Nature". That the gods have a Nature basis or a lived-world basis is clearly assumed by Yāska, Sāyaṇa and other traditional interpreters. That is as it should be because man establishes his relation to the world by means of special, worshipping relations to the many guardians of Nature who regulate his world, these being the Sun, Moon, Sky, Earth, Wind, etc.. There never was, even at the stage of the presumed infancy of man's religious and intellectual history, any actual personification of the powers of Nature. What personification there was is merely due to the situation of language insofar as man used it purposively. There is no ground for calling these named guardians of the world "powers of Nature", because the concept "nature" itself could never dwell in the same language as that in which the gods dwell.

Names of gods are their meaning or essence, which no concept as such can represent. They are, no doubt, symbols but not *representational* symbols. That is the reason why Yāska, the etymologist, suggests several alternative derivations – only so-called be-

cause they are *intentionally* mere sound-derivations – for each of the names of the deities. They are not meant to be derivations in the modern philologist's sense, and to attempt something like that in respect of those names which have their location in the region of the telling only would have been quite absurd. Actually, they are just sound-play, which alone they can be in the ontology of myth. Yāska gives a variety of these in the seventh chapter of his *Nirukta*. Let us pick out just two of them for illustration. Thus the word *indra* comes from *irā dṛ*, "he gives food", or *irā dhā*, also "he gives food", or *irā dhāraya*, "he holds food", or *indu dru*, "he runs for the sake of Soma", or *indu ram*, "he delights in Soma", or *idam dṛś*, "he sees this", or from *ind*, to be powerful. The word *mitra* comes from *trāyate*, "he saves", or from *pra-miti*, "he destroys", or from *dravate*, "he measures things together", or from *mid*, "to be fat". The pattern is adopted for all the names of the gods, Varuṇa, Agni, *et al.*

Now, insofar as Vedic Mantras are the telling of which the myth is the essence, it is natural to think of the *logos*, for no telling can ignore it. It is noteworthy that when we approach the subject in the manner warranted by the Western tradition in terms of *mythos* and *logos* separately and hence look for corresponding terms in Sanskrit, we find that there are no separate terms for the two. On the other hand, the same word, *vāk*, serves for both, and unless we have made the approach from the Western standpoint we would not even notice that there is a distinction. In the Greek tradition, the two words are there but, as Heidegger makes it clear, they nonetheless mean the same. "*Logos* says the same (as *mythos*); *mythos* and *logos* are not, as historians of philosophy claim, placed in opposition by philosophy as such; on the contrary, the early Greek thinkers (Parmanides, *Fragment* 8) are precisely the ones to use *mythos* and *logos* in the same sense. *Mythos* and *logos* became separated only at the point where neither of them can keep its original nature."[29] Heidegger, continuing on, shows how the two words got separated and points out also the consequence of their separation. "In Plato's works this separation has actually taken place. Historians and philologists by virtue of a prejudice which modern rationalism adopted from Platonism, imagine that *mythos* was destroyed by *logos*." And then he adds, "But nothing religious is ever destroyed by logic; it is destroyed only by the God's withdrawal".

The *Ṛg Veda* has many things to say about *Vāk* and it says it in different ways. As for the origin of the word *vāk*, it is from *vac*

(*Dhātupāṭha* xxiv. 55), which means to speak, tell, declare, mention, proclaim, describe, etc. [Because there are two variant ways of verbal conjugation, a slight distinction is drawn between *vac* root 1 and *vac* root 2, but that is of no significant consequence as far as the noun *vāk* is concerned, nor in fact for the meanings of conjugated verbal forms either for that matter, for the most part.] It is noteworthy that another word, *vad*, closely akin to *vac*, includes "tell", and "lay" or "lay down" in its range of meanings, which clearly remind us of the two different senses in which the Greek *legein* was originally used, as Heidegger shows to be the case. The noun that comes from *vad*, i.e., *vāda*, unlike *vāk*, is already charged with connotations of conceptually ordered propositions, and later of speaking with conceptual backing and logical connectives in situations of argument. But *vāk* is simply speaking as such, speaking of *reality as it is* (*yathā bhūtam*), and entails no conceptual-logical elaboration.

The noun *vāk*, feminine in gender, means voice, speech, language. Originally it included the meaning of sound also. In later literature *vāk* was occasionally employed for statement, or assertion. In the *Ṛg Veda*, however, vāk is used, as a rule, in the sense of speaking especially associated with itself. Therefore, it is as though where the Veda is not told – a condition which the *Ṛg Veda* neither envisages nor conceives – *Vāk* is neither spoken nor heard. And yet insofar as the Veda is told the groundedness of all language in the Vedic *Vāk* is posed. On the contrary, the *Ṛg Veda* does not tell us how to think of language apart from this groundedness, that is to say, as belonging to Nature or even human nature so as at some propitious point to link it to the Vedic *Vāk*. Therefore, the implication is strictly one way, and insofar as we fancy other alternatives to this one way of implication we will surely receive the answer "no".

The Veda, the text, speaks from the perspectives of the way *Vāk* itself wants to speak and does speak. And because of this there can be no way of distinguishing between the way the Veda speaks and the way *Vāk* itself speaks. And even when the Vedas (in plural) speak of *Vāk* they show forth this perspective as an announcement of the ground not only of *Vāk's* own speaking but of *what* they are speaking. The foremost thing they say is about gnosis and this task cannot be performed except by the telling *Vāk*, the *mytho-logos*, itself, which then is both the speaker and the spoken. For that reason what the Vedic texts do is to introduce *Vāk* in different ways.

There are, basically, three different ways of speaking of *Vāk* in the *Ṛg Veda*: (1) as a goddess; (2) in the symbolism of the cow; (3) in direct apposition to gnosis. Let us look at them briefly.

There is a *sūkta* (10.125) which is completely devoted to the goddess *Vāk*. In it the goddess describes herself. [It is also, simultaneously, a hymn sung by a *ṛṣi* in her praise. Thus the speaker is also the spoken – a pattern found throughout the text.] She is co-traveller with the Rudras, Vāsus and the Ādityas, holder aloft of Varuṇa, Indra and the Aśvins; sustainer and nourisher of Tvaṣṭar; queen; gatherer of treasures; one through whose *Māyā* everyone sees, breathes and hears; the sole speaker of welcoming words to the gods and men as they come to the feast; the bender of Indra's bow, etc. She pervades heaven and earth, extends over all creation, touching even heaven with her forehead, and holds together all beings by breathing the strong breath.

In several places in the *Ṛg veda*, the symbol of the cows stands for *Vāk*, most importantly in 1.61, 62 and 164; 9.26, 97 and 101; and 10.67 and 68. The special connection of Indra and Bṛhaspati to *Vāk* (symbolised by the cows) is noteworthy. Their epic battle with the demons who had stolen the cows and kept them bound and hidden in a cave are well-known to those who at least know the lore of the *Ṛg Veda* (as narrated in 1.62; 10.67 and 68). Bṛhaspati the god, too, is a symbol for *Vāk* in the sense that the seeker is also the sought, in the sense that *Vāk's* being brought to light is interchangeable with *Vāk* bringing everything to light, it being light itself: "Bṛhaspati calls out in thunderous voice to the cows", (*Bṛhaspatiḥ abhikanikradat gāh*).[30] "The cows too call out to him in a thousand streams", (*taṁ gāvo abhyanūṣata sahasradhārām akṣitaṁ*).[31] "Bṛhaspati brings them out from the dark into the light", (*Bṛhaspatiḥ tamasi jyotiricchannudusrā ākarvi hi tisra avāḥ*).[32] Bṛhaspati stands for thought as it calls out to *Vāk* and also hears the call of *Vāk*. Thought's calling out to *Vāk* is as much the work of *Vāk* as its own calling forth thought.

It is only insofar as *Vāk* enters the scene does thought discover gnosis as its ground. And only insofar as thought's own questions as well as its responses are heard in the way *Vāk* itself speaks can they be connected with gnosis. Thus, let us take the following questions and answers, (1.164.34 and 35):

Questions: I ask thee about the ultimate end (limit) of the earth;
Thee I ask, where is the navel of the world?; I ask thee of the

stallion's fecond seed; Thee I ask about the ultimate abode of *Vāk*. (*pṛcchāmi tvā param antaṁ pṛthivyāḥ*; *pṛcchāmi yatra bhuvanasya nābhiḥ*; *pṛcchāmi tvā vṛṣṇaḥ aśvasya retaḥ*; *pṛcchāmi vācaḥ paramaṁ vi'omaḥ*).

Answers: The earth's end (limit) is *this* altar;
The world's navel is *this* sacrifice (*yajñaḥ*); The stallion's fecund seed is *this* Soma; The ultimate abode of speech is *this Brahman*. (*iyaṁ vediḥ paraḥ antaḥ pṛthivyāḥ ayaṁ yajñaḥ bhuvanasya nābhiḥ ayaṁ somaḥ vṛṣṇaḥ aśvasya retaḥ*; *brahmā ayaṁ vācaḥ paramaṁ vi'omaḥ*).

The next but one verse articulates the pathos of ignorance and darkness of the one who thought on ultimate things and then declares how in that ignorant, bewildered state he received a part of *ṛta*, or True-Order, due to the approach of *ṛta's* first born, (*yadā mā ā agan prathamajāḥ ṛtasya āt it vācaḥ aśnuve bhāgam asyaḥ*). "The first-born of True-Order" (*prathamajāḥ ṛtasya*) is *Vāk*, i.e., *logos*, in that it is the pre-eminent procession out of True-Order insofar as it itself approaches thought. Thought *receives* a part of *Vāk*. The term for part, i.e., *bhāgaḥ*, is not used in the sense of divided part or division as *Vāk* cannot be divided. To receive a part of *Vāk* is in the proper sense to participate in it, that is, in the sense of the Greek *μετέχειν*, from which comes *μέθεξις*, a word originally used by Plato to express the participation of the forms (*ἰδέα* or *εἶδος*) in the Real itself.

Here a new vision of thought is pre-figured, however dimly. According to it, thought, i.e. in the sense in which it is envisaged and not in any neutral sense, is what participates in *Vāk*. By virtue of such participation it discovers its ground in gnosis, and that discovery itself is part and parcel of the conduct according to the way gnosis itself behaves. And this accord itself is made possible by the grace of *Vāk*, which works simultaneously as that through which gnosis appears and as that which enables thought to discover itself. Within this vision of thought is enclosed another truth which will unravel itself as we move further along, namely, that thought discovering itself and thinking are the same.

VĀK AND THE *VEDIC* TELLING CLIMAXING IN THE HYMN ON GNOSIS

Here we return to what we have called Vedic telling and to the "how" of *Vāk's* communication, or making possible the appearing, through the telling, of gnosis (*jñāna*) – the telling being simultaneously an enabling address to thought. In this way the basis for the accord between gnosis and thought is put forward, primarily in the shape of the understanding of meaning, or *artha jñāna*, so central a concern for the Vedas, a concern that exists within the telling itself. The possibility of understanding meaning comes to pass then the possibility of thought itself comes to pass, that is to say, in accordance with the way gnosis itself behaves. Looked at from the opposite end, however, it is also the case that gnosis appears only insofar as the possibility of thought comes to pass. This is what would be, outside of the grace of *Vāk*, a vicious circle, a catch 22 in colloquial slang. But this is exactly what the grace of *Vāk* breaks down. And only with the breaking down of the impossible vicious circle – which continues to be demonstrated throughout the movement of gnosis philosophy – is there both the appearing of gnosis and the enabling of thought.

The understanding of meaning is the shape the accord between the way in which gnosis behaves and the way in which thought conducts itself takes in the Veda. [This also shows the hermeneutical beginning as well as the ultimate hermeneutical character of gnosis philosophy, as we shall see all the way.] The climactic articulation of the issue of understanding meaning is found in the Hymn on Gnosis, or *jñāna-sūkta* (*Ṛg Veda*, 10.71), which is also where the Vedic telling itself reaches its climax. According to traditional Vedic interpretation, in this hymn the sage Bṛhaspati addresses himself having been astonished by encountering a group of very young children, who were found to be miraculously in possession of that understanding which even great sages had been hard put to achieve.[33]

The hymn begins with the preface,

Verse 1: *bṛhaspate prathamaṁ vāco agraṁ*; *yat prairata nāmadheyaṁ dadhānāḥ*; *yadeṣāṁ śreṣṭhaṁ yadaripramāsīt*; *preṇā tadeṣāṁ nihitaṁ guhāviḥ.*

Translation: O Bṛhaspati, from the first to the last of *Vāk* (is

thus): (At the first stage is) address by giving that which is mere name; (At the last stage) the utterance of Vedic *Vāk* in its most excellent form (*śreṣṭham*); Blemishless (*aripram*), hidden in a cave (*nihitamguhā*), shining (*āviḥ*), accessible by grace (*preṇā*).

Following this preface, the subsequent verses are devoted to showing how gnosis is served by the understanding of the meaning of Vedic words:

Verse 2: *saktum iva tita unā punaṁto*; *yatra dhīrā manasā vācam akrata*; *atrā sakhāyaḥ sakhyāni jānate*; *bhadraiṣāṁ lakṣmī nihitādhi vāci.*

Translation: As they sift grain in a cribble,
The wise ones in their mind (cleanse) the words; (Then) the assembled friends (*sakhāyaḥ*) (i.e., the Vedic circle) understand (*jānate*) the meaning to be known; In their (the wise ones') telling or utterance (*vāci*) is holy grace (*bhadreṣām lakṣmiḥ*).

The words, "in their telling is holy grace" carry the assurance that the telling of the wise ones brings meaning with it, and that it would be neither devoid of meaning nor contrary to meaning.[34]

Verse 3: *yajñena vācaḥ pádavīyam āyan*; *tām anvavindan ṛṣiṣu praviṣṭāṁ*; *tām ābhṛtyā vyadadhu purutrā*; *tāṁ śaptarebhā abhi saṁ navaṁte.*

Translation: They (the children) achieved through *yajña* perfect progress in the understanding of *Vāk*; They achieved that which is possible only for great seers; Having brought it forth they spread it widely; (Then) the seven singers set it to song.

Setting it to song is to ensure its perpetuation through time, making sure that it endures: which is what is meant by *tām saptarebhā abhi saṁ navaṁte.*

Verse 4: *uta tvaḥ paśyan na dadarśa vācam*; *uta tvaḥ śṛṇvan na śṛṇoti enām*; *tvasmai tanvaṁ vi sasre*; *jāyeva patya uśatī suvāsāḥ.*

Translation: (In the telling) one though seeing does not see *Vāk;*

Another though hearing does not hear it; But for yet another it shines by itself; Even as a loving, well-adorned bride shows herself to her groom (of her own pleasure).

Verse 5: *uta tvaṁ sakhye sthirapītam āhur*; *nainam hinvaṁtyapi vājineṣu*; *adhenvā carati māyayaiṣa*; *vācaṁ śuśruvāṅ aphalāma-puṣpām.*

Translation: Among friends (i.e., the Vedic circle), of one they say he is settled in gnosis; For it (i.e., gnosis) is not set aside from understanding of Vedic words; One who sets it aside is labouring under an illusion (*māyayā*); And the *Vāk* he hears (i.e., in the telling) bears neither fruit nor blossom.

Verse 6: *yasti tyāja sacividaṁ sakhāyaṁ*; *na tasya vācyapi bhāgo asti*; *yadīṁ śṛṇoti alakaṁ śṛṇoti*; *nahi praveda sukṛtasya paṁthām.*

Translation: Who rejects a friend knows a freind; He has no part (i.e. does not participate) also in *Vāk*; He hears but in vain he hears; And he knows not the path of virtue.

Commentators who know the tradition make it clear that understanding of the words of the Veda is an act of friendship, rather a reciprocation, because the Veda confers its friendship upon those who hear it being told. Hence the Veda is called *sacivid* (meaning *sakhivid*), that is, knower of friends. The knowing of friends means a certain gratitude on the part of the Veda itself to those who help it by understanding it, thus enabling it to abide in the world. The help is the reciprocation of friendship. And further, as Verse 5, lines 1 and 2 make it clear, understanding of the Veda is inseparable from gnosis. Therefore, friendship with the Veda (i.e., friendship as reciprocated) is really the basis of an extraordinary relationship with gnosis itself. The friendship with the Veda now looms before us as the ground of philosophical thought. The possibility of philosophical thought resides in this friendship, which is really, as we have seen, a reciprocated friendship, that is, in other words, not a self-initiated relation on the part of thought but rather a responding one. In these terms philosophy is where thought conducts itself in the way gnosis itself behaves towards thought, which is essentially through *Vāk*. Hence we see quite

clearly how and why in the tradition which flows from the Veda philosophical thought is what is approached from the ground of gnosis. And we get a different account of what we may call by the name philosophy. And we also have here a new dimension for thinking itself inasmuch as it is the Veda's own gratitude which is the foundational *thanks* because *Vāk* itself has preceded it as the language of *stuti*, or praise.

Verse 7: *akṣaṇvaṁtaḥ karṇavaṁtaḥ sakhāyo; mano javeṣvasamā babhūvuḥ; ādaghnāsa upakakṣāsa u tve; hṛdā iva snātvā u tve dadṛśre.*

Translation: Friends (of the Veda) possessed of eyes and ears differ in their understanding; Some stand as if in water level (of understanding) up to the mouth; Others stand in water level that reaches the breast and armpit (only); And yet others immerse themselves in water deep enough to dive in.

Verse 8: *hṛdā taṣṭeṣu manaso javeṣu; yadbrāhmaṇā saṁyajaṁte sakhāyaḥ; atrāha tvam vijahur vedyābhiḥ; ohabrahmāṇo vicaraṁtyu tve.*

Translation: When friends who are knowers of *Brahman* In their heart consider profound verses, There some of them are cast aside, While others go far in their deep thinking.

Verse 9: *ime ye nārvāṅgna paraścaraṁti; na brāhmaṇāso na sute karāsaḥ; ta ete vācam abhipadya pāpayā; siṁstantraṁ tanvate aprajajñayaḥ.*

Translation: They (i.e., the former) move not in the path of the virtuous (i.e., in the transcendent); They are not knowers of *Brahman*, nor do they conduct themselves in virtue (i.e., in accord with the way of gnosis); Uttering *Vāk* sinfully, They adopt the craft of the plough and are devoid of the benefit of gnosis.

In this verse those who do not understand *Vāk* are condemmed. It says that these false friends of the Veda are not really knowers of *Brahman* as they only outwardly associate with those who are, that their thinking is mere plodding, altogether unaware of what

gnosis is. Their model is the craft of the plough even in their professed freindship with the Veda, and hence they are really devoid of the benefit of gnosis.

Verse 10: *sarve naṁdaṁti yaśasāgatena; sabhā sāhena sakhyā sakhāyaḥ; kilbiṣasprt pituṣaṇirhi eṣām; araṁ hito bhavati vājināya.*

Translation: All assembled friends rejoice on account of the friend who has come (i.e., Soma, the exhilerating friend); Skilful and able to resolve doubts of the assembled; He is their perfector and nourisher; And he disposes himself as the food in the sacred vessel, fit for eating.

Verse 11: *ṛcāṁ tvaḥ poṣamāste pupuṣvān; gāyatraṁ tvo gāyatī śakvarīṣu; brahmā tvo vadati jātavidyāṁ; yajñasya mātrāṁ vi mimīta u tvaḥ.*

Translation: One (i.e., Hotṛ) brings together the verses and recites; Another (i.e., Udgātṛ) sings the *gāyatra* in *śakvarī* metres; Another (i.e., Brāhman) narrates the wisdom pertaining to things that exist; And yet another determines the rules of the sacrificial rite.

This verse simply describes the four divisions in the Vedic telling, assigned formally to four classes of Vedic priest-tellers. Every narration in the Vedas must be seen in the light of the supreme *jñana-sūkta*, or Gnosis Hymn, which has just been explicated. Indeed, the tradition regards this hymn as foundational to the understanding of the *Ṛg Veda* (and other Vedas too) as a whole.

This hymn is where the Indian tradition of gnosis-philosophy actually begins. Does gnosis appear here and in similar references to it in the Veda? The answer is that it does but only to the degree in which dialogue with the hymn – and with the Veda – is successful, that is to say, if carried out on its own terms. If successful, then in the appearing of gnosis thought comes to pass, the possibility of which will have been always held in *Vāk's* telling, but depending also on our observing what is most essential in such thought, namely *the inviolable compact of adoration – of what is worth adoring – and questioning* both together in the same, like two sides of a coin. And thought coming to pass is gnosis releasing itself.

THE CONTINUING CURRENCY OF THOUGHT THROUGH CONCRETE SPECULATION

The thought which is the extension of gnosis holds within it the original astonishment, or the shock of wonder, such being the response to gnosis itself. It is for this reason that it is the compact of adoration and questioning.

However, thought generated this wise is not dissociated from thought in the general sense of what has its ground in human consciousness. With regard to the latter we observed in our Introduction: "There is a primordial operation of human consciousness as a consequence of its interaction with what it encounters as reality, first of all the world itself in both its determinate and indeterminate aspects." We also showed how this latter thought betakes itself to its natural paths, i.e., the penetration of hidden depths of reality, boundary-making for coping with the boundless, and penetration of otherness inherent in phenomena. Now, far from staying at a distance from its stream, the thought grounded on gnosis joins it and seeks to direct it to its own trajectory.

We have, however, no actual model for this operation in the Veda itself. But we have something else that is quite helpful, which is *Vāk's* own further telling, nevertheless harking back to the narration that relates gnosis, of a kind of wisdom concerning existing things. We learn that *Vāk* is not an idle teller of tales, for whatever it tells comes within the orbit of gnosis.

Such telling constitutes the *science of reflection upon things that exist*, which are then, we might say, speculations, cosmogonic in general character. In that manner we are justified in seeing the possibility of thought (as grounded in gnosis) continuing its prevalence through these concrete modes which raise problems in the way thought grounded in human consciousness does. Even so, we will notice that the compact of adoration and questioning is not broken. These speculations cover a fairly large range of "problems" which are posed to human consciousness by what it encounters as reality, priority being given to the very mystery of the world's existence comprehending human consciousness itself in that it is part thereof.

It is in this way that a *science of reflection upon things that exist* comes into being in the *Ṛg Veda*, which is called by a name that means exactly that, i.e., *jāta-vidyā*, mentioned in the Hymn

on Gnosis (last verse, line 3) as already a subject of narration by the Brāhman, the third among the four divisions of Vedic priests. The term *jāta-vidyā* acquires, according to the *Nirukta*, 1.8, the specific meaning of wisdom pertaining to the origin of the world. The narration of this takes the form of cosmogonic accounts, which are necessarily circular in that they are themselves understood as being part of the cosmos whose origin is thereby accounted for. The last fact merely reinforces the primordial nature of *Vāk*, which does the telling, albeit now from within the cosmos.

There are several such important accounts, narrated from different perspectives. A few of the best known are the following:

1. The *Puruṣa hymn* (*Ṛg Veda*, 10.90), describing the sacrifice, by the gods, of Puruṣa, the primeval, infinite Personal Being, out of whose dismembered body the cosmos and everything in it, including human beings as well as the Vedas, originated.
2. The *Viśva-karmā hymn* (*Ṛg Veda*, 10.82), according to which the world was made by a primordial architect, Viśvakarmā.
3. The *Prajāpati hymn* (*Ṛg Veda*, 10.121), which celebrates the birth of the Unknown God Prajāpati (Father of beings), who as *Hiraṇya-garbha* (the Golden Germ) himself arose in the beginning and then made the universe.

These above hymns are essentially cosmogonic in their speculative thrust. But there is another which, although cosmogonic, stands out as being of a different character, with greater metaphysical possibilities. This is what is known as the *Nāsadīya hymn*, so called on account of its very first word, *nāsat* (that which is not).

It begins with an indeterminate "then" (*tadānīm*) when "there was" neither "that which is" nor "that which is not" (*nāsadāsīnno sadāsīt*). What it is concerned with is the "then", which is an abyss unmarked by that which is not we perceive in death (*mṛtyu*) as well as by that which is we perceive in the deathless state (*amṛtam*). Out of this Void "the One came into being by the power of heat, or penance" (*tapasaḥ tad mahinā ajāyata ekam*) – and everything else came into being through the "desire" (*kāma*) which entered the One. And desire itself was the seed of all things, itself the first-fruit of the "mind" (*manasaḥ*).

Despite this profound account it is a wistful song. It is, no doubt, true that "the wise who have searched in their own hearts with wisdom could find out the bonds of what is in what is not"

(*sato bandhum asati niravindan hṛdi pratiṣyā kavayo manīṣā*). This kind of searching in the heart is similar to what we have characterized as "the primordial operation of human consciousness as a consequence of its interaction with what it encounters as reality in both its determinate and indeterminate aspects", except that, as becomes a hymn of this kind, this reflective operation is held as successful in making a conclusive discovery, the thinkers being paradigmatic "wise ones" – and the wisdom is also the practical one of adjusting life to death. Nonetheless, the hymn ends wistfully in respect of our ever finding anyone who really knows and can tell the answers to a series of questions which are asked at the end, held to be beyond the ken of even the wise who, searching in their hearts, have arrived at positive conclusions as to "how" things that exist relate to, or arise from, the background of their having not existed previously and having to pass out of existence again.

The questions asked now are different, deeper. "Who here knows and who here can tell *whence, wherefore, wither, why* has this creation come into being? (*ko addhvā veda ka iha pra vocat ājātākuta iyam visṛṣṭiḥ*?). This question is repeated several times with slight variations. The key word in these is *kuta*, which translators render as "whence?" That is where the force of the questions are lost. The word has a variety of meanings, and not only in later literature, such as "whither?", "whence?" and not the least "why?", "wherefore?", "for what cause?", and "to what end?". At least the *Ṛg Vedic* usage here is indeterminate such that the sense "why?" "wherefore?", or "to what end?" is powerfully operative, especially read in the proper philosophical context. That is all the more evident because of the "why?" questions pertaining to the world, that is, "why is there a world?", "why is the world such as it is and not otherwise?", "but what does it mean for us that there is a world?", and so on in a progressive and even dialectical manner. These are but forms of the great question of Being. It is to such unavoidable questions for which no one is known to have an answer that the hymn refers when it says: "The embodied principles (the deities) we appeal to in thinking out answers to these questions are posterior to, i.e., part of, the world; then who knows from what cause/for what reason it has arisen?" (*arvāg devā asya visarjanena adha kaḥ veda yataḥ ābabhūva*?). To put it in today's language, not even the greatest philosophers, scientists or even saints have answers to these questions, and it

would be vain to expect anyone to have any. That all men are alike, equally helpless before these questions is the final truth of the world.

The wistfulness of the hymn expressed in these questions is, however, only a pointer to gnosis, which far from stifling these questions, actually takes them up into its own ground. But thought as it stands upon the ground of gnosis takes them unto itself, putting them into its own trajectory. In that way, not having answers to certain questions will no longer be a source of distress or defeat or perplexity, as that will be perceived as their very essence and their reason for being, causing them to be meditated upon under gnosis. In this way, questioning's compact with adoration will also be preserved without breach.

CHAPTER II

GNOSIS AND PHILOSOPHICAL THOUGHT IN THE UPANIṢADS

[The Upaniṣads speak essentially of Ultimate Reality (under the name *Brahman*) whose disposition is gnosis. Everything else radiates from this centre. The most definitive speaking of *Brahman* – and of gnosis – is heard in the Upaniṣads.]

THE TEXTS OF THE UPANIṢADS

The Upaniṣads are appended to the second great division of the Vedas, namely, the Brāhmaṇas, as the last portion of the Vedic corpus. They constitute the principal foundation (*prasthāna*) of Vedānta. They are the foundation of all of Indian philosophy.

There are a large number of ancient religio-philosophical texts which bear the name *upaniṣad*. Their total number is variously estimated in different places. The *Muktikā Upaniṣad*, a relatively recent treatise (although called an *upaniṣad*) speaks of 108, while some other sources mention the number of 200. But the vast majority of these do not belong to the Vedic class and, therefore, are not Upaniṣads in the proper sense: they are usually later, sectarian works given the august title *upaniṣad* in an honorary manner. The Upaniṣads proper, on the contrary, are those which belong to the Vedic corpus and their number ranges from 11 to 17. We must first of all take the 11 as forming the core, employing as criterion of judgement the fact that the great Vedānta philosopher of a later day, Śankara, commented on them. These are the *Īśā, Kena, Kaṭha, Praśna, Muṇḍaka, Māṇḍūkya, Aitareya, Taittirīya, Bṛhadāraṇyaka, Chāndogya*, and *Śvetāśvatara*. To this list is usually added the *Kauṣītakī* and *Maitrāyaṇīya* (or *Maitrī*) to make up the thirteen principal Upaniṣads, a canon which has found favour with most scholars of the present day. Then there are the

Mahānārāyaṇa, Jābāla and *Paiṅgala*, to which Śankara himself refers (along with the *Kauṣītakī*) in his great work on the *Brahma Sūtra*. The list of the principal Upaniṣads can be further stretched out by adding another two or three, based on the fact that another great Vedānta commentator, Rāmānuja, refers to them, also as Upaniṣads. However, although it may seem arbitrary, to confine ourselves to the nowadays universally accepted thirteen has some definite practical advantages for a study that does not purport to be either exhaustive or thorough in the matter of canon.

The style and contents of the principal Upaniṣads are such as to permit us to assign them to three successive periods. Accordingly, the following grouping can be plausibly made:

1. The early prose Upaniṣads: The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka, Chāndogya, Aitareya, Taittirīya, Kauṣītaki* and *Kena*.
2. The middle period metrical Upaniṣads: the *Kaṭha, Īśā, Śvetāśvatara, Muṇḍaka* (and *Mahānārāyaṇa*, if this last were to be included).
3. The later prose Upaniṣads: the *Praśna, Maitrāyaṇīya* and *Māṇḍūkya*.

The Upaniṣads vary greatly in length. The two longest are the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* and *Chāndogya*, while the two shortest are the *Īśā* and *Māṇḍūkya*. From the following observations alone we will get an idea of how much the size varies: the *Bṛadāraṇyaka*, consists of a total, distributed through 6 chapters, of 438 passages, some of which in number of words are individually long enough to accomodate the entire eighteen verses of the *Īśā* or the entire twelve of the *Māṇḍūkya*. The other nine range in between these two extremes.

Clearly, length itself is a small consideration. But, for reasons of their diverse contents as well as of their acknowledged antiquity and originality the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* and *Chāndogya* have been traditionally accorded the primacy of place among all the Upaniṣads. Some of the material in them are also found in the others, a fact which suggests borrowing on the part of the latter.

Every one of the Upaniṣads is also marked by a certain completeness, most probably owing to the fact that all of them were kept alive in different localities or circles as texts for teaching, until in course of time they were brought together so as to constitute a distinct division of the Vedic literature. From that time onwards,

whenever it was, we have had the extant texts grouped together as today.

THE MEANING OF THE WORD UPANIṢAD

Now, what does the word *upaniṣad* literally mean? It is either a deliberate coinage (less likely) or an accidental formation (more likely) from *upa* + *ni* + *sad*, meaning (translating backwards) sitting down devotedly near by, referring most probably to some private sessions at which the proximity, primarily between the teacher and the pupils, assumed both intimacy and confidentiality. Similar substantives with quite contrary meanings have come from the verb *sad*, combined with appropriate suffixes. Thus we have *pariṣad* and *samsad*, both carrying the connotation of *public* assembly. But the Indian tradition has generally tended to explain the origin of the word *upaniṣad* from the point of view of its philosophical meaning. Thus Śankara gives several parallel explanations (probably purported to be derivations as well). In the *Kena Upaniṣad* he defines it as that which destroys (*sādayati, vināśayati*) the ignorance of the nature of 'I' and 'mine' consciousness by moving a person to the Ultimate Reality (i.e., *Brahman*) by the signs of identity (with it).[1] The same derivation is presented in the introduction to the *Commentary on the Īśā Upaniṣad*. In his Introduction to the *Commentary on the Taittirīya* he equates *upaniṣad* with *vidyā* (gnosis), "because, for those who practise it [such things as] conception, birth, old age, etc., are removed (*niśādanāt*) or destroyed, that is to say, insofar as they will be brought near (*upanigamayitṛtvāt*) to the Ultimate Reality (i.e., *Brahman*) in which their highest good rests."[2] In this context he adds, "the books are also called *upāniṣad* on account of the above meaning" (*tadarthatvāt grantho'pi upaniṣad*).[3] In other places too he defines the word as denoting certain books.[4] Clearly, that is close to our modern use of the word.

The word *upaniṣad* appears in the Upaniṣads themselves, obviously not in the sense of books or literary compositions but in the sense of some profound teaching, or *ādeśa*, carrying the association of both secrecy and sacredness. Secrecy is conveyed by certain terms which the Upaniṣads use, in contexts, as synonyms for

upaniṣad: these terms are *rahasyam* (secret), *guhyam* (hidden in the cave), *guhyatamam* (most hidden in the cave), etc..

As we think of the secret in this respect, the sense of sacredness is inalienable, for somehow at their depth the two are related. The confidentiality involved in secrecy is not a worldly notion. Also, a distinctive character of the secret that is sacred by definition, and vice-versa, is that, in a paradoxical manner of speaking, the truth concerned is for everyone. Observing secrecy appears to be, in a real sense a way of publicly witnessing to a vital character of sacred truth, namely, its universality and accessibility to all in principle. That character is safe-guarded, not denied, by keeping the sacred truth out of profane, public view. Let us refer to a concrete incident recorded in the *Bṛhadaraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, 3.2.13: "Then Yājñavalkya said, Arthabhāga, my dear, take my hand. We two alone shall know of this; this is not for us (to speak of) in public". Then Yājñavalkya took him aside and whispered into his ears.

The rules about imparting the sacred-secret teaching came under a strict code of instruction. Only a very few were reckoned to have the requisite qualification (or eligibility) to receive such teaching, consequent upon a devout commitment to gnosis to be observed for life, which is translated as the ability to enter with understanding into the teaching and to abide in it. These conditions naturally restricted the choice, in the highly stylized and ritually controlled social system of the times, to the best and most faithful of a teacher's circle of pupils, to those properly initiated, with a conventional preference for a teacher's eldest son, assuming that that son is also a devout seeker of wisdom.[5]

The word *upaniṣad* was used in the Upaniṣads as a designation for certain mystical teachings, which were often conveyed in the form of cryptic formulas. Thus, at the end of the *Kena Upaniṣad* we come across the expression *tadvanam* (literally, 'dearest of all'), put forward, as a symbol for meditation and contemplation, by the teacher who was discussing Ultimate Reality. The teacher further says, upon the pupil's request, that this word is the *upaniṣad* (*iti upaniṣad*).[6] Likewise, the famous formula in *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, 2.1.20, *satyasya systam* (literally "truth of truth") is called *upaniṣad*. In yet another place (following *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, 3.10.5), after expounding the eternal truth in the form of a mystical chant, the speaker concludes the text with the words "he who knows thus, this is the *upaniṣad* (*ya evam veda ity*

upaniṣad"). There are also several similar other expressions, the most important of which is *tajjalān* – clearly a made up one – upon which one is asked to meditate.[7] The expression *tajjalān* (*Chān-dogya Upaniṣad*, 3.14.1) means that which is the source, the subsistence and the goal of all things.

It is clear that these cryptic formulas and the teachings which they helped to focus were the heart of a whole, wise-spread tradition of wisdom pertaining to Ultimate Reality and to man's liberation from the bondage of ignorance and ill. In course of time the majority of these diverse records of wisdom produced in different Brāhmaṇas and later, perhaps somewhat before the times when the *Bhagavadgītā* and the *Brahma Sūtra* were composed, came to be reckoned together as forming a distinct group of texts of the Vedic classification.

THE UPANIṢADS AS THE CULMINATION OF VEDIC RELATION

Doubtless, it must have taken several centuries for the Upaniṣads as we have them to be formed. However, we can notice reflections in sundry places on the question of the relation between the Upaniṣads, some already formed and some being formed, and the Vedas. In this way, the status of the Upaniṣads is being determined as Vedānta. Thought on that question was already beginning to move forward even in the earlier phases of the texts. The expression "the [transcendent] person in the Upaniṣadic sense (*aupaniṣadam puruṣam*)" occurs in *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, 3.9.26, which beyond a doubt is a very early passage. Yājñavalkya asked Śākalya about this person in the manner of a fateful test, which the latter failed – and istantly his head fell off (symbolically speaking) as a result. In *Chāndogya*, 3.5.1-4 we find a compelling account of the place of the Upaniṣadic teachings in relation to the Vedas. The Vedas are called the hidden teachings (*guhyā ādeśā*) and described as essences and the Upaniṣadic teachings as the essences of the essences (*rasānām rasāḥ*). The Vedas are described as nectars and these teachings as their nectars (*vedā hy amṛtaḥ teṣām etany amṛtāni*). In *Kena*, 4.7 and 8 the category of *upaniṣad* is employed in the sense of the supreme teaching as that which alone is competent to make *Brahman* known, while the Vedas are regarded as stepping-stones to the Upaniṣadic wisdom:

(The pupil): 'Sir tell (me) the *upaniṣad*'. (The teacher): 'The *upaniṣad* has been told, we have told thee the *upaniṣad* pertaining to *Brahman*'. Ascetic contemplation (*tapaḥ*), self-control (*damaḥ*) work (*karma*) are its support (*pratiṣṭhā*), the Vedas are all (its) members and truth (*satyam*) its resting place (*āyatanam*)'.

The colophonic expression 'this is the *upaniṣad*' (*iti upaniṣad*) at the end of several important statements about *Brahman* actually conveys the sense of a higher source of wisdom than the Vedas, that is to say, in respect of the knowledge of *Brahman*. Evidently, this expression is purposely inserted in crucial places, after certain tellings.

The term *vedānta* is also found used in the Upaniṣadic texts themselves in some places as an official designation for the Upaniṣads, and it is most significant that it should appear in them. We meet with it in *Śvetāśvatara*, 6.22, in connection with a particular teaching which is described as "the highest secret in Vedānta, revealed in a former epoch" (*vedānte paramaṁ guhyam pūrvakalpe pracoditam*). We can only wonder whether the designation is used in reference to those early and mighty Upaniṣads, the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* and *Chāndogya*, which were probably already looked upon as not only works of high antiquity (as far as the Upaniṣads go) but also as documents of immense spiritual authority. The *Śvetāśvatara* is usually placed among the middle period metrical Upaniṣads. The *Muṇḍaka*, which also belongs to the same period, refers (in 3.2.5,6) to "*ṛṣis* who are satisfied with gnosis" (*ṛṣayaḥ jñāna tṛptāḥ*) and to "ascetics who have properly ascertained the meaning of Vedānta knowledge" (*vedānta-vijñāna suniścitārthāḥ yatayaḥ*). It is quite likely, in view of this reference, that the Upaniṣadic sages of old like Yājñavalkya, Uddālaka and Janaka, serve as models, as they must have already been elevated in the tradition to the status of *ṛṣis*, the difference being that they are not seers of the Mantras, like the Vedic *ṛṣis*, but seers of *Brahman* or *Ātman*.

The Upaniṣads are considered of higher importance than the Vedas (i.e., Mantras) because of that which they are the seeing and hearing – and telling – of, namely *Brahman/Ātman*. This seems to be clearly implied in the famous statement of Yājñavalkya in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, "It is the *Ātman* which is to be seen, heard, thought of and reflected on", (*ātmā vā are draṣṭavyaḥ śrotavyo*

mantavyo nididhyāsanavyaḥ).[8] Without any doubt, this judgement of comparison is implied in the discipleship of Nārada, a great knower of the Vedas (i.e., Mantras) and its subsidiary sciences, to Sanatkumāra, a paradigmatic Upaniṣadic figure, for the sake of *Ātman*-gnosis. In his self-introduction Nārada begins by saying, "Venerable Sir, I know the *Ṛg Veda*, the *Yajur Veda*, the *Sāma Veda*, the *Atharvaṇa* as the fourth (Veda) ... etc. But Venerable Sir, I am only a knower of the Mantras (*mantravid evā'smi*), not a knower of *Ātman* (*na ātmavid*)".[9]

"Revelation" in respect of the Upaniṣads means removing the veil that obscures the ground of thought. The ground is gnosis and the removal of the veil is accomplished by *Vāk*. This revelation, this act of *Vāk*, is that by which thought comes to its own. There is no higher revelation than that by which thought comes to its own. In such a revelation thought is not extraneous to gnosis, nor gnosis extraneous to thought. We may single out this fact as the unique character of the Upaniṣads. In the Mantras thought has been struggling to come to its own, and in the Upaniṣads it is finally here. Therefore, there is actually no conflict between the Mantras and the Upanisads in spite of the sounds of certain statements *in* the Upaniṣads, which, however, are not Upaniṣadic, that is to say Vedāntic, statements. The sound of these things we hear in the Upaniṣads simply point to the fact that in the Mantras thought has been struggling to come to its own, and that it is finally here.

The word 'finally' is an interpretation of *anta* in *vedānta*, and it is not to be understood in the historical sense insofar as it swallows up history altogether, removing it from the ground of thought. Its meaning is simply ontological because, it having already come, a situation wherein it does not yet exist or one in which it no longer exists is not conceivable except outside the ontological framework, which is the same as the framework of gnosis.

The predicament of philosophical thought as distinguished from any other, i.e., scientific, technological, aesthetic or ordinary, is that it must stake itself on the notion of Ultimate Reality even to the extent of negating what it cannot affirm in knowledge or, may be, of finding a way of comporting itself with ultimate seriousness towards that which lies before it in the spirit of resolute scepsis. Ultimate Reality must come in somehow. In the Upaniṣads, Ultimate Reality is approached through gnosis, as thought itself is seen

to proceed from the ground of gnosis. When one says gnosis, in that same breath one says Ultimate Reality and when one says Ultimate Reality, in that same breath one says gnosis.

Gnosis is to be understood as the disposition of Ultimate Reality, a disposition which is towards us. And thought is the extension of gnosis. It is on account of this that philosophy is to be defined as thought conducting itself in accordance with the way gnosis itself behaves. Here thought comes to its own, removing all possibilities of an extraneous relation between itself and gnosis. There is also entailed here the gathering of all other thought that has to do with the question of Ultimate Reality, putting such thought on a new trajectory. Thus, the Upaniṣads present to all philosophy which comes from them the perennial possibility of going into every human sphere of thought in order to gather and orient towards gnosis everything that has to do with the question of Ultimate Reality. The exhibition of that possibility constitutes the body of the Upaniṣadic "philosophy" which radiates from, and in turn focuses on, its core, namely, *Brahma-vidyā* or *Ātma-vidyā*, the term *vidyā* having to be understood as man's intellectual and spiritual appropriation of gnosis.

In the Upaniṣads, thought that is approached from gnosis as the ground is found in its paradigmatic form. Now, we may well ask: how does it act as the ground for receiving – and also for gathering – all other kinds of thinking and how does it provide the background of illumination in which to place all our questions? For the reviewing – as well as gathering – of all other thinking and placing all questions that have to do with Ultimate Reality in an illuminated background is essential for the discourse which forms the body of the Upaniṣadic philosophy to be produced. That is how *Brahma-vidyā* or *Ātma-vidyā* expands itself to the dimensions of coherent philosophical discourse, entailing all kinds of discursive thinking and dialectical arguments, which are known, in that same meaning, by the name *vāda* – and there is a proliferation of such *vādas* in Vedānta.

Gnosis extending itself as thought means, reversely, drawing gnosis into the realm of what always comes to our purview as thought, i.e., having to do with the question of Ultimate Reality so that a great conjunction is effectuated. What is thus called thought may be traced to Being, as its extension (Parmanides), and its essential character may be interpreted as questioning, openness, placing oneself in the draft of Being, etc. (Heidegger). [Other possible understandings are also not to be precluded.]

THE CENTRALITY OF BRAHMAN/ĀTMAN IN THE UPANIṢADS

In the Upaniṣads *Brahman/Ātman* is Ultimate Reality. There philosophy is essentially the laying of the foundation for coherent discourse about Ultimate Reality as *Brahman/Ātman*, which is approached from gnosis as the ground. Coherence is achieved through drawing gnosis into the realm of what comes to our purview as thought, whereby thought also comes to its own. And consequently any lingering signs that gnosis and thought are extraneous to each other is done away with, which is an accomplishment integral to the very purpose of *Vāk*. The revelation of *Brahman/Ātman* is that wherein thought is fully restored as the extension of gnosis, thereby abolishing any appearance of a gulf between them.

To begin with, it will be useful to discuss the words *brahman* and *ātman* in their independent histories, each carrying its own meanings. Although from the point of view of Upaniṣadic revelation as well as philosophy, such a historical tracing of their career is totally irrelevant, it is nevertheless valid, insofar as transformation of words and ideas is the vehicle of revelation through texts. And also, because revelation does not entail the introduction of new words, such an undertaking is entirely legitimate.

Both *brahman* and *ātman* began as obscure ideas in the Mantras and soon acquired greater significance. The word *brahman* had already been there in the Mantras. What it means in most occurrences in the Mantras is a moot question. Whatever else it may have meant eventually, it is incontrovertible that at first it most commonly stood for prayer, that is to say, a special use of words within the telling of the Mantras that already connotes a proximity and closeness to Ultimate Reality and destined to be its linguistic surrogate. Here are some of the references to that effect: "Prayers (*brahman*) for praise have Ghṛtamadas made ready";[10] "Maghavan, he gives prayer (*brahman*) praise, laud and soma".[11] There is in one place the occurrence of the strange phrase "the prayer that carries (or accepts) prayer", (*brahmāṇaṁ brahmavāhasam*).[12] Here in this above and similar occurrences is something very close to the notion of prayer carrying itself or even praying to itself, which would be quite consistent with the meaning of *Vāk*, associated also with the intrinsic potency of ritual, an idea already not too far off in the horizon. In fact, this is expressed in the conception of

Bṛhaspati the god, as Brāhmaṇaspati, the Lord of prayer. This Lord of prayer is also called prayer as in the expression, *brahmāṇam ca bṛhaspatim,*[13] which means literally that.

Prayer as *Vāk* that is intimately associated with ritual is the commonest meaning of *brahman* in the Mantras. But it is already the word with the highest destiny and in such places as in the Hymn on Gnosis, already gives more than a portent of it. Śankara traces the word from *bṛh*, to grow, and accordingly ascribes to it the sense of "growth", of that which expresses itself in speech and in Nature as force. Max Müller adopts that etymology.[14] Paul Deussen perceives it as the human will in its striving towards the divine, whereby the person in the act of prayer returns to the timeless, spaceless, impersonal self of his, which is God.[15] A.B. Keith, while agreeing that the word normally means prayer, nevertheless adds that it can also mean spell and that, furthermore, in many passages it must be taken as "holy power".[16] Heinrich Zimmer accepts the classical Indian derivation (assumed also by Max Müller) from *bṛh*, to grow, but he goes further forward to demonstrate that the verb means, as clearly expressed in the formation *bṛhmyati*, to "increase, strengthen, fortify" and that, therefore, it definitely has the denotation of power assigned by Keith. He particularly cites the Vedic noun *barhaṇa*, from the same root, denoting "power", "strength", corresponding, as he thinks, exactly to a term current in the later tradition, i.e., *śakti.*[17]

Now, there is much to be said for the view that these different meanings proposed need not be taken as exclusive of one another. In fact, each of them can be legitimately ascribed to the term in some occurrence or other. Zimmer's intuition does seem to be able to reconcile different derivations, but then we must stress the following two points: (1) the meaning of *brahman* as prayer, ritual prayer, must be deemed basal and permanent and other meanings can only be added to it; (2) it is perhaps extravagant to imply that the denotation of power is somehow culminative, even for the Upaniṣads.

It is true that the notion of *brahman* blazes for us the trail from the Mantras to the Upaniṣads through the Brāhmaṇas. But if we read only the passages of the Mantras where this occurs or even the Brāhmaṇas alone, without the posterior developments of the Upaniṣads, we certainly would not get the impression that it is of paramount importance in either of them. No doubt, the notion appears quite prominently in the Brāhmaṇas, as it tends to become

the supreme principle but is still far from what it is destined to become in the Upaniṣads. The main pre-occupation of the Brāhmaṇas is surely *yajña* (sacrificial rite) as Sāyaṇa quite rightly informs us.[18] Conspicuous as the notion of *brahman* is in them, it is consistently depicted as the highest potency of the sacrificial rite. Concerning this, Keith quite rightly states: "The sacrifice clearly occupied the minds of the priests to the practical exclusion of all else, and their theories were in large measure devoted to the consideration of its relation to the universe, to the gods and to men."[19] And he further observes,

> This theory is the most characteristic and independent part of the Brāhmaṇas: in the speculations as to the unity of the universe and the God in whom that unity finds expression, the Brāhmaṇas are only inheritors of the speculation of the Rigveda, but in the doctrine of the sacrifice they express a theory which may have been held in germ at least in the age of the Rigveda, but which is not expressed there and which doubtless in considerable measure is a new creation.[20]

In the development of a dominant philosophy of *yajña*, which tends to treat sacrifice as a power unto itself, although in conjunction with *Vāk* and even within the framework of the Ultimately Real, the *Atharva Vedic* hymns as well as the special orientation of the *Yajur Veda* made decisive contributions. For this reason it is all too essential to recognize that were we to pursue the development of all aspects of Vedic religion and philosophy we would have been obliged to study these Vedas as well. But this is not what we presently intend to do. So it is enough for us to be confined to the main stream.

In the Brāhmaṇas *Brahman* was mainly thought of as the intrinsic potency of *yajña*, or sacrifice, and this gave a tremendous impetus to the study of correct rules and interpretation of *yajña*. The *Śatapatha* and *Aitareya*, the two most important among the Brāhmaṇas, clearly show the extent to which the notion of *Brahman* dominated the sacrifice. The *Śatapatha* has this striking passage:

> They said to *Brahman* 'we will lay thee down (or set thee up) here'. What will therefore accrue to me? 'Thou shalt be the highest of us' – 'so be it!' They accordingly lay the *Brahman* down here, whence people say that *Brahman* is the highest of the Gods. Now by this fourth layer [of the altar, obviously] these two, heaven and earth, are upheld and the fourth layer is

> **the *Brahman*, whence people say that heaven and earth are upheld by *Brahman*.**[21]

It is said that in the beginning the gods were mortal, that they became immortal only when they came in possession of *Brahman*.[22] There is nothing greater than *Brahman* "and he who knows that, being himself the greatest, becomes the highest among his own people. This *Brahman* has nothing before it and nothing after it."[23] The Brāhmaṇas attain to the conception of the self-originated *Brahman* (*Brahman Svayaṁbhu*).[24] In all these developments the idea of the bond (*bandhutā*, or *nidāna*) between the ritual and eternal model played a vital role. The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* commends meditation on *Brahman* in order to understand sacrifice.[25]

The *ātman* notion, likewise, had its origin in the Mantras. As in the case of the word *brahman*, so with respect to *ātman* also some consideration of etymology is in order. Customarily, scholars have assumed that the word derived from the root *an*, to breathe, or *at*, to move, or *av*, to blow, and hence to be cognate with the Greek *atmos* and *autmen*. Contrary to this, Deussen suggests[26] that from the beginning the term was highly abstract, derived from the roots *a*, as in *aham* (I) and *ta* (this), so that it meant 'this I', that is, one's own self. Reaffirming the traditional etymology over against Deussen's, Keith cites *Ṛg Veda* passages in support, where the meaning according to him, is obviously wind.[27] But oddly enough, Keith's references really do not prove the derivation from the traditional roots. The word *ātman* occurs in association with *vāta*, etc., meaning wind. Expressions like *ātmā devānām* (the *ātman* of the gods)[28] do not really tell us that *ātman is* wind. In fact, they do not give us any clue to the meaning of the word. However, there is no reason why a notion like this could not have been both abstract and concrete at the same time. Perhaps we must give up the belief that in respect of man's fundamental notions these are mutually exclusive. This situation of the interplay between our abstract conception and concrete perception has to be taken back to that very mythic point which we call the origin of a notion. And we call it mythic point as we cannot really put our finger on something and say "this is the actual point". In the order of the operation of our consciousness, can we really say that abstraction came after concrete perception? Is not perception already controlled by abstraction, and in fact vice-versa as well? Why should

wind or breath have suggested the ideas of spirit and self, or conversely, why should such ideas ever have been identified with wind or spirit? It only suggests to us that the power of abstraction had been quite non-temporally co-existent with the faculties of perception, and reminds us that we are not looking for the mystery of their interplay where we ought to look, to wit, in consciousness. It is to the great credit of the Indian philosophies of language, which already had their beginning in the *Ṛg Veda*, that they provided us with a framework in which to investigate the origins of notions in a structure which identifies eternal language with eternal consciousness. [This is not the same as the theories of the origin of names propounded by etymologists like Yāska.] But we must forego consideration of these matters now.

In the *Ṛg Veda* itself there are passages where *ātman* is used in the sense of the self of a being as when it is said of the Sun (*sūrya*) that he is the self (soul) of what moves and moves not,[29] or when Soma (the god of exhilaration) is called the self (soul) of sacrifice,[30] the primeval self (soul) of sacrifice.[31] Then we have the possible reflexive use of the word as the expression "on account of the All *itself*" (*sarvasmāt ātmanaḥ*).[32]

However, in the *Ṛg Veda* we find no instance where the word is used in the sense either of man's soul or self or that of the universal soul, the latter of which comes to be one of the leading characteristics of the Upaniṣads. But these senses indirectly arrive in some places in the Brāhmaṇas, for instance, in the *Śatapatha* in a few places where the real essence of man is set over against the principle of breath by which a person's psycho-physical being is revealed.[33] It is called the "undefined breath",[34] and as the "eleventh breath" in which the ten vital airs (of life) are established.[35] In one place, the heart of the victim of sacrifice is regarded as its *ātman* which is, however, connected with the sacrificial rite through the act of breathing into the victim.[36] There it is also called mind (*manas*). Elsewhere, we read the *ātman* of the sacrificial food, as being full of joy (*ānanda*), even as the gods are full of joy, and on him, therefore, we are asked to meditate.[37] [Henceforth we shall refer to this word used in the sense of the universal Self as *Ātman*, and in all other senses including that of the individual soul as *ātman*. Where the distinction is either not clear or not applicable we will continue to write *Atman.*]

In another place the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* calls for meditation on the *Ātman*; there we are given the completest and most advanced description of it anywhere in the Brāhmaṇas,

> Let him meditate on the *Ātman* which is made of intelligence, possessing a body of life-breath, with a form of light and with an ethereal nature, which is able to change its shape at will and swift as thought, consisting of all sweet odours and tastes, which holds sway over all the regions and pervades the whole universe, which is silent and indifferent – like a grain of rice, or like a grain of barley, or like a grain of millet or the smallest granule of a millet grain, so is the golden Puruṣa in the heart; like a smokeless light, it is greater than the sky, greater than space, greater than the earth, greater than all beings – that *Ātman* of life-breath is my *ātman* (self); upon passing away from hence I shall attain to that *Ātman*.[38]

The *ātman* notion moves towards a convergence with the *brahman* notion in what may chronologically be the last passages of the Brāhmaṇas as in the *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa*, 10.6.3.

The Revelation of Identity: a Clarification

The Brāhmaṇas lead to two notions, *Brahman* and *ātman* (*Ātman*) towards a convergence, the logical outcome of which is their identification, which becomes fully expressed in the Upaniṣads. But the matter of the identification of the two is a little more complex than is ostensively assumed by students of the Upaniṣads. In order to perceive that complexity we must take account of the two-fold definition of the idea of *ātman* (*Ātman*) still prevailing in the Upaniṣads. In contrast, *Brahman* is given a consistently univocal meaning as the infinite, all-encompassing, eternal, one only Being, that is, as far as the Upaniṣads are concerned.

In the first place, we can easily see the many passages where *Ātman* is treated as synonymous with *Brahman* and defined identically. In the second place, we can see equally clearly many other passages where *ātman* is treated as the individual self (or soul) synonymous with *jīva*. A few examples will be given below from the two greatest Upaniṣads.

1. *For Ātman as identical with Brahman*

Bṛhadāraṇyaka, 1.4.1-17: Here we have four parallel accounts of the origin of all things; two of these trace all things to *Brahman* and the other two to *Ātman*. We have the following prologic statements in each case: "In the beginning *Ātman* alone was this (world), in the manner of a person", 1.4.1.; "In the beginning, *Brahman* indeed was this (world)", 1.4.10,11; "In the beginning, *Ātman* indeed was this (world)," 1.4.17.

Bṛhadāraṇyaka, 2.4.5, and 4.5.6: "*Ātman* should be seen, heard, etc.", (*ātmā va are draṣṭavyaḥ śrotavyaḥ* etc.).

Bṛhadāraṇyaka, 2.5.1-14: Here "this shining immortal person" (*tejomayo'mṛtamayaḥ puruṣaḥ*) is defined in 14 different contexts as this *Ātman*, this *immortal, this Brahman* and *this all.*

Bṛhadāraṇyaka, 3.4.1: "Explain to me the *Brahman* who is immediately present and directly perceived, who is the *Ātman* in all things", (*yat sākṣād aparokṣād brahma, ya ātmā sarvāntaraḥ, tam me vyācakṣveti*). Bṛhadāraṇyaka, 3.4.2 continues to explain this *Ātman* as "the seer of seeing", "hearer of hearing", "thinker of thinking", and "understander of understanding".

Bṛhadāraṇyaka, 3.7.2-23: The recurring formula is: "He who dwells in the earth, yet is within the earth, whom the earth does not know, whose body the earth is, who controls the earth from within, he is your *Ātman*, the inner controller, the immortal" This formula is repeated twenty times, each time substituting "earth" with a different category.

Chāndogya, 7.25.2: "Now the instruction about *Ātman* (*āthāta ātmādeśa*), *Ātman* is below, *Ātman* is above, *Ātman* is behind, *Ātman* is in front, *Ātman* is to south, *Ātman* is to the north, *Ātman* indeed is all this."

Chāndogya, 7.26.1: "All this is of *Ātman*", (*ātmata eva idaṁ sarvam iti*.)

2. *For ātman as the individual self*

Bṛhadāranyaka, 3.9.26: "On what are you and (your) *ātman* i.e., self, supported (*kasmin nu tvaṁ cātmā ca pratiṣthitau*).

Bṛhadāraṇyaka, 4.4.1: [This is the beginning of the great discourse on death which is itself described as the] "*ātman's* getting to the absence of strength", (*ātmā abalyam nyetya*).

3. *For the word used in both senses*

There are very many other examples as well for both usages as described above. But the passages where the word is used in both senses is quite illuminating. For instance, in *Bṛhadāranyaka*, 2.5.15, we have this: "In this *Ātman* are all beings ... and all *ātmans* held together", (*asminn ātmani sarvāṇi bhūtani ... sarva eta ātmanaḥ samarpitāḥ*).

Now we return to the complexity of the matter of the identification of *Brahman* and *Ātman*. In the examples given for the reference to *Brahman* and *Ātman* as identical, what we see is sim-

ply identical or homogeneous definition of the two. The two are already pre-supposed to be synonymous or interchangeable. But the philosophical *act* of identification is different. It pertains to the new identification of the individual *ātman* (*jīva*), or self, with the Supreme *Ātman* (or *Brahman*). Śankara clearly explains this: "The term *ātman*, without any qualifying prefix has the denotation restricted to the individual self, like the word 'cow' and the like: hence thou art that Being, O Śvetaketu."[39] The culminating statement expressing this philosophical act of identification occurs nine times in the famous dialogue of Uddālaka with his son. (*Chāndogya*, 6.8.7 – 6.16.3). Here the father repeats the words "that is the truth, that is the *Ātman*, That art thou, O Śvetaketu", (*tat satyam, sa ātmā, tat tvam asi, śvetaketo*). In this context, which is a discussion on death, *Ātman* is synonymous with *Brahman*, while the "thou" of Śvetaketu, stands for his individual *ātman* or self. The same declaration is made in other words "That individual soul (*ātman*) (subject to mortality) is *Brahman*" (*sa vā ayam ātmā brahma*), *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, 4.4.5. This is clear because the context is the discourse on death, as described above.

This fairly lengthy detour we have found necessary because there is, concerning this matter, some confusion among modern scholars, especially in the light of the convergence of the two nations, *Brahman* and *Ātman*, already taking place in the latest portions of the Brāhmaṇas. This convergence could mean the possibility of identical or homogeneous definition of the two. Here their equation is already pre-supposed and each simply serves as a synonym for the other. The subject of the new declaration, the revolutionary philosophical act, is not the equation of these two already known as two "First Principles", but the equation of these two taken synonymously as but *the* (one) "First Principle", or Ultimate Reality, and the transitory, mortal, finite, individual self anxious for knowledge and spiritual emancipation. To be fair, this identification itself was vaguely anticipated in a meditational mood in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, 10.6.32, but that surely does not yet have the force of the identity announced in the Upsaniṣads. In any case, it does not make any difference as nobody has a right to insist that the knowledge must appear only in the texts known as the Upaniṣads. Further, is it not true that sometimes one hears the rumblings before one hears the roar of the thunder itself?

With no recognition of the need for apprehending the distinction outlined above, Deussen, writes: "If for our present purpose

we hold fast to this distinction of the Brahman as the cosmical principle of the universe, the ātman as the psychical, the fundamental thought of the entire Upanishad philosophy may be expressed by the simple equation: Brahman = Ātman." Let us call this equation *A*.

Deussen continues:

> That is to say – the Brahman, the power which presents itself to us materialized in all existing things which creates, sustains, preserves, and receives back into itself again all worlds, this eternal infinite divine power is identical with the ātman, with that which after stripping off everything external, we discover in ourselves as our real, most essential being, our individual self, the soul. The identity of the Brahman and the Ātman, of God and the soul, is the fundamental thought of the entire doctrine of the Upanishads.[40]

Let us call this equation *B*.

Modern writers on the Upaniṣads, first Deussen, and following his lead all the others, Keith, Radhakrishnan, Ranade, Hiriyanna, *et. al.*, make it appear that equation A and B are one and the same. As we have argued, the first is already pre-supposed. The Upaniṣads, do not declare it, for that would be carrying no stirring message. On the other hand, the declaration made to one existing individual, who is aware of his finitude and mortality, that he, his self, is one with *Brahman/Ātman* is the message so far not heard, ever, at any time. Śankara makes this point crystal clear in his *Commentary on the Brahma Sūtra*, as he writes:

> The statement 'that thou art' is [made] because of its being the instruction pertaining to the *Brahman*-bond of the embodied person. This instruction as to the *Brahman-Ātman*-hood of the embodied person is given as self-established fact, not as something to be accomplished by effort. Hence, it is this *Brahman*-Ātman-hood of the *jīva*-self which is understood to be based on the scripture, that serves to obliterate the natural notion of a man, about the *jīva*-self which is understood to be based on the scripture, that serves to obliterate the natural notion of a man about the *jīva*-self being of the nature of the body, even as the understanding of rope as the rope obliterates the notion of a snake.[41]

This declaration does not have the character of equating two "First Principles", because it – like all the similar ones – is made in the context of the existing individual's anguished quest for liberation (*mokṣa-vyāpāra*). This would be entirely in accord with Śankara's definition of *upaniṣad* itself as the *vidyā* which destroys (for those who practise it) such things as birth, old age, etc., and brings (them) near to Ultimate Reality.

The declaration of identity brings to us a new knowledge. The emphasis on the "new" should not be taken to mean that the knowledge is historically unprecedented, although incidentally that is also the case. It really means that it is qualitatively novel. As Śankara says, it is self-accomplished or come by itself (*svayam prasiddham*), not something to be accomplished (*na ... prasādhyam*) by us. This gives a new ground for thought, something on the basis of which thought grasps itself in an unprecedented way. The coming to view of this ground is an astonishing fact which forces thought to review its previous foundations including even postulated *a prioris* and presuppositions. Nevertheless, gnosis puts itself at the disposal of thought, both to answer the questions which we have not asked and would never have thought to ask, apart from its arousing power, and to provide new orientations to answers to the questions we have previously asked, those of an existential character as well as those we have clothed with notions in our mind, especially the ones pertaining to "First principles" themselves, and most of all to take into gnosis questions that have no answers.

DESCRIPTION OF BRAHMAN-ĀTMAN

The entire purpose of the Upaniṣads is to reveal *Brahman* and to make thought able to receive what is revealed. As we have said, that revelation takes place by virtue of the movement of gnosis for our benefit. This is a boon. The Upaniṣads say: "He is to be attained only by those to whom he (*Ātman*) grants the boon. To such a one *Ātman* reveals his own nature."[42]

There are many revelatory statements in the Upaniṣads. Through all of them *Brahman*-gnosis is presented as the novel (*anadhigata*) truth. However, there is here a fundamental problem, i.e., in regard to the diversity of the descriptions and what seems to be their divergent emphases. Some of them appear to favour the idea that *Brahman* is quality-less (*nirguṇa*) and beyond personality, while the others to favour the idea that *Brahman* is full of qualities (*saguṇa*) and hence personal. The paradigmatic statement of the first kind is that *Brahman* is "Not this, Not this" (*Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, 2.3.6; 4.4.22; etc.). The following are the examples of descriptions

of the second kind: "This shining, immortal person, *tejomayaḥ amṛtamaya puruṣaḥ* (*Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, 2.5.1); Omnipresent God, *devaḥ pradiṣo nu sarvaḥ*, (*Śvetāśvatara*, 2.16); rewarder, *vāmāniḥ* (*Chāndogya*, 4.15.3); etc. In course of time, in the eyes of some theologians this difference between the so-called *saguṇa* and *nirguṇa* descriptions appeared to be of enormous importance. But Śankara, undoubtedly in the spirit of the Upaniṣads themselves, seeks to overcome this distinction. In one place he observes: "It is not possible to say that the Upaniṣads endorse the view that there is a divergence in types of descriptions of *Brahman*. The difference exists merely for the purpose of facilitating different meditations (*upāsana*), and in truth there is no difference – that is the purport".[43] The solution is this: despite the apparent divergence in the descriptions, they are, in respect of the novel truth revealed, utterly homogeneous. An inconsequential problem must not occupy our minds. For it is not error to depict *Brahman* in ways which are natural to the religious mind, and there is no reason to believe that the purport of the *nirguṇa* description is to prevent *Brahman* from being worshipped as God. On the contrary, there is all the more reason for worshipping *Brahman* as God. That such is not the case is a sheer misunderstanding perpetrated by some modern writers. But we must press on and be led to where the Upaniṣads really lead us.

Everything that is said in the Upaniṣads is to be re-ordered from the viewpoint of the following two summit descriptions.

1. *"Not this, Not this" (neti, neti)*

For this we turn to *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, 2.3.1-6. From stanza 1 to the middle of stanza 6 a brief account of the principles which hold the mind, particularly the religious mind, as it contemplates Ultimate Reality as *Brahman* is given. Stanza 1 enunciates the two forms of *Brahman*, the imaged and the unimaged. The imaged, symbolized by the sun, clearly are the concrete, perpetually grasped entities, (stanza 2), while the unimaged, symbolized by air and ether (*ākāśa*) are the abstract, conceptually grasped entities leading up to the transcedent principles, or, in the technical language, *adhidaivatam*, which literally in the Sanskrit idiom means what pertains to the gods (stanza 3).

The big switch from this type of description to the other takes place in the middle of stanza 6. "Now, therefore, the instruction (pertaining to *Brahman*) 'Not this, Not this', for there is nothing higher than this. Now (its) designation is 'the truth of truth'."[44] The words 'now, therefore' (*atha ato*) are variously used in philosophical texts, but here they indicate a radical switch of themes, which amounts to the surpassing and sometimes even rejection of what was maintained up to that point. This is a stylistic convention found in the Upaniṣads themselves. [The various uses of the term 'now' (*atha*) are discussed in the *Śloka-Vārtika*, 1.1.22-24]. With regard to the significance of this statement Śankara writes:

> How is it, then, that through these two terms 'Not this, Not this' it is sought to describe the truth of truth? It is said: by means of the expurgation of all limiting adjuncts the terms refer to something that has no particularities, whether of name, action, differentiation, species or quality, as the function of language is in respect of them. But *Brahman* has none of these particularities. Hence it cannot be described as such and such, as we can say 'here goes a white cow with horn'. *Braham* is described (at the lower level) by the super-imposition of name and form, and of action, by such expressions as '*Brahman* that is consciousness and bliss', 'what is of the stuff of consciousness' and even by the very words *brahman* and *ātman*. Nevertheless, when we have to describe *Brahman* as it really is, that is, freed from all adjuncts of particularities, then it cannot be described by any means whatsoever. At that point there is only one course left, viz., to describe it as 'Not this, Not this', in other words, through pure negation.[45]

2. *"That Thou art", tat tvam asi*

As with the declaration "Not this, Not this", so with the declaration "That Thou art". The entire 6th chapter of the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* is an account of how the climactic knowledge of non-duality is imparted to a young man by his teacher (and father) after taking him through the shattering experience of shedding his sense of duality. The young man, Śvetaketu, was well learned in the Vedas and hence had truly imbibed and understood their religious principles. Yet he had not received that instruction "by which the unheard becomes heard, and the unthought thought, the ununderstood understood, (*yena aśrutam śrutam bhavati, amataṁ mataṁ bhavati, avijñātam vijñātaṁ bhavati*)". Śvetaketu is one who had completely lived up to the knowledge of the Mantras. But in the great encounter he confessed, "Surely, those holy

men (i.e., his teachers) did not know this, for if they had known it how could they not have told it to me", (*na vai nūnam bhagavantas tad etad avediṣuḥ yadd hi etad avediṣyan katham me nāvakṣyan iti*)? Immediately, Śvetaketu was led into a lengthy and penetrating dialogue on Being (*sat*), and of the origin and repose of beings in Being, (*imāḥ sarvāḥ prajāḥ sadāyatanāḥ satpratiṣṭhāḥ*). Then comes the culminating declaration repeated nine times (6.8.7-6.16.3): "That which is the subtle essence, in which all this has its self, that is the Truth, that is the *Ātman* (Self), That Thou art, O Śvetaketu, so it is", (*raso aṇimā aitad ātmyam idaṁ sarvam, tat satyam, sa ātmā, tat tvam asi, śvetaketo iti*). Śankara writes: "This self is known as Being and it is through the Self that this whole world is imbued with self-hood."[46] The discourse has been leading up to this grand climax. Here the presupposition about Being itself was clarified, as it was laid down as the first step in the teacher's leading Śvetaketu to this culminating declaration. Now the pupil knows what was meant when it was stated (6.2.1): "In the beginning, my dear, this was Being alone, one only without a second", (*sad eva idam agra āsīt ekam eva advitīyam*).

The two declarations, i.e., "Not this, Noth this" and "That Thou art" complement each other. In the one the reality of *Brahman* is asserted negatively, that is, by the exclusion of all notions and pre-suppositions, while in the other it is asserted positively as Being, i.e., understood in an umprecedented way, and as Self. These two are the two summits of the description of *Brahman*. They govern and permeate all others.

In the paradigmatic statements "Not this, Not this", "That Thou art" and many others, *Brahman* is shown to be simply what it is. The revelation takes place through *Vāk*. The knowledge is stored in *Vāk*, in whose keeping it is, and *Vāk* alone reveals it. "*Vāk* is the sole resting place of all Vedas", (*sarveṣāṁ vedānāṁ vāgekāyanam*), says the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (2.4.11).

Now, there is a secondary use of the word *Vāk* in the Upaniṣads, namely as man's language which is the instrument of his thought about Ultimate Reality. In that sense it is described as the companion of the eye and the mind. Ultimate Reality, or *Brahman*, accordingly, is not accessible to man's independent thought, i.e., his eye, his mind and language. Hence it is said "thither the eye goes not, nor language nor mind", (*na tatra cakṣur gacchati na vāggacchati no manaḥ*), *Kena*, 1.3. "Not grasped by the eye or language", (*na cakṣuṣā gṛhyate nāpi vācā*), *Muṇḍaka*, 3.1.8. It is

"that whence language returns along with mind without attaining it, (*yato vāco nivartante aprāpya manasā saha*), *Taittirīya*, 2.4.1. This kind of purely human language is held to be distinct from *Vāk* which by its own speaking brings gnosis.

But by taking this position on language and thought, the Upaniṣads do not require that we abandon them. On the contrary, the Upaniṣads only show that language and thought themselves are objects to be grasped, i.e., from the ground of gnosis, rather than they serving as independent means for grasping Ultimate Reality. Hence it is said "That which is not revealed by (human) language but that which illuminates (human) language itself: that verily know thou to be *Brahman*; this (i.e., language) is not what they think this (to be)", (*yad vācā na abhyuditam yena vāg abhyudyate tad eva brahma tvaṁ viddhi nedam yad idam upāsate*), *Kena*, 1.5.

GNOSIS AND THOUGHT

So gnosis is the beginning, not only goal, of all investigations pertaining to Ultimate Reality – if by Ultimate Reality we mean that of which gnosis is the disposition, i.e., *Brahman*. No doubt, through our own thought and our own speculative and other employments of language we can quite conceivably construct views of Ultimate Reality. Or by critical thought and analytical employment of language we can equally conceivably demolish all views of Ultimate Reality. The basic issue in all this is how to relate the known and the unknown with each other. Philosophers have always pitted the known against the unknown, or contrariwise, the unknown against the known, or even juggled the two in the quest for what the Ultimately Real is. But the Upaniṣads put *Brahman* entirely outside this framework of the use of language and thought which point philosophy in these directions. Hence, *Kena Upaniṣad*, 1.4, says, "Other indeed is it to the known and other too is it to the Unknown", (*anyad eva tad viditād atho aviditād adhi*).

The mutual otherness between the known and the unknown is what both critical and speculative philosophers have to work with. Critical philosophers reject philosophical appropriation of the transcendent as they think that such appropriation is an illusion and that it obliterates their mutual otherness, but would institute

an enduring dividing line, although the founder of Critical Philosophy, Kant, himself however would summon us to view the unknown that is beyond the limit of what we can hope to know by Pure Reason with ultimate, fundamentally religious, concern. On the other hand, the master of speculative philosophy, Hegel, would overcome the mutual otherness between the known and the unknown by dialectics. However, for the Upaniṣads, the otherness is not what is mutual between the two, but an absolute fact that puts both on the same plane. Also, this absolute otherness of the Wholly Other, i.e., *Brahman*, is both preserved and dissolved in the immediacy of gnosis. The primary assignment that thought assumes for itself is to follow the ways of such utter immediacy, because gnosis puts itself at the disposal of thought.

The questions that one raises by thought, all summed up in the underlying question of all, i.e., that of Being, can receive an answer in gnosis. Hence gnosis always immediately shows forth that of which it is itself the disposition, i.e., *Brahman*, as Being (*sat*), which is the answer to the sum of all the questions that thought has carried as its great burden. The *Praśna Upaniṣad*, 3.2, describes such questions as *atipraśnāḥ*, i.e., as those that are beyond the range of asking, and suggests that only "those whom *Brahman* loves" (*brahmiṣṭāḥ*) are able to receive an answer.

In the light of the Upaniṣads we come to know that there are two ways to approach "Being", that is, (1) as the sum of all questions and (2) as the answer to the sum of all questions. In the first approach we seek a ground upon which and due to which our questions *are* questions. And insofar as that ground itself is not answer we are moved to put it in *epochē* by asking the question as to Being, in the forms of "What is Being?" and "Why Being?". No doubt, the shock of wonder which has provoked the questions helps thought to contain it by means of the *epochē*, and that is necessary as otherwise thought must become paralysed.

What is raised in thought and whose form thought assumes must be answered in thought and thought itself, and if not answered must still be held, but the prospect for that comes only when thought goes beyond what had been till then apprehended as its ground, i.e., Being according to the first approach, in other words, as the sum and source of the questions. That is where gnosis enters the picture as the disposition of Ultimate Reality, offering a different ground to thought, i.e., the thought that answers, as well as holds the questions, including the ones without answers. And Ulti-

mate Reality as Being in the sense of what it essentially is according to the first appraoch, i.e., as the sum and source of all questions, is now restored to a new light. And the thought that works as the answer and as the power to hold the questions is seen as the extension of gnosis, which is what is differently expressed by us as "the disposition of Ultimate Reality".

We may ask "how is this so?" But when asking it we must not forget that it too is a question. When we realize that gnosis is henceforth to be the ground of thought in the sense of extension of gnosis we will be enabled to ask it and also all the others in the manner of review, of gathering, under gnosis.

In the Upaniṣads there are several discussions on Being, or *sat*, but always from the ground of gnosis. The most notable statement, however, is in *Chāndogya*, 6.2.1-2:

> In the beginning this was Being alone, one only without a second. Some say that in the beginning this was non-Being alone, one only without a second. From that non-Being Being arose. But how indeed, dear one, could it be so, said he, how could Being be generated by non-Being? Being itself was this in the beginning, one only without a second.[47]

In the Upaniṣadic tradition 'gnosis', or *jñāna*, has always reference to *Brahman*, often implicitly. But equally often it is also made explicit by the expression '*brahman*-gnosis' or *brahma-jñāna*, thereby eliminating any possible ambiguity of meaning. However, that other expression, *brahma-vidyā*, which means the spiritual and intellectual appropriation of *Brahman*-gnosis, has come to be the more commonly used one. But these are not by any means really different from each other in what they entail for the philosophical discipline. Rather, it is the case that what is only implicit in the one is brought out explicitly and into clearer visibility by the other – that is how they function.

The term *brahma-vidyā* expresses both the *theōrea* and the *praxis* underlying the gnosis which has sole reference to *Brahman*, and hence is applicable to the conduct of thought. So this term gives testimony to the fact that thought can conduct itself in accordance with the way gnosis itself behaves, that is, inasmuch as its sole reference is to *Brahman*.

A brief account of the meaning of the word *vidyā* is in order, although here we are concerned with it as it forms a compound with the word *brahman*. It should be noted that *vidyā* has a wide range

of meanings, including even such things as certain kinds of practical skills and knowledge of certain crafts. Archery too, accordingly, is considered a great *vidyā*. So also are medicine, architecture and all the other pursuits which require specialized training and skills. But we also find the word used in the sense of higher, spiritual pursuits. The Upaniṣads use it in that sense and recognize several specific ones such as *agni-vidyā, prāṇa-vidyā, ṣāṇḍilya-vidyā, aumkāra-vidyā*, etc. But the Upaniṣads also recognize such a thing as *avidyā* or agnosis, indicating the eclipse of gnosis. Thus *Chāndogya*, 1.1.10 has it, "*vidyā* and *avidyā* are different from each other", *nānā tu vidyā ca avidyā ca*. It is said that *vidyā* is the means to immortality, *vidyayā vindate amṛtam*, (*Kena*, 2.4). The three Vedas (*Ṛk, Yajus* and *Sāma*) are themselves regarded as *vidyās* (*Chāndogya*, 1.4.2).

But even with respect to the Vedas a tension exists between two views: one which understands them as manuals of ritual activity, or *karma*, and the other which understands them as *vidyā*. And indeed *vidyā* is held to be infinitely the more excellent of the two. Hence *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, 1.5.16 states, "By *karma* one obtains the world of the fathers (lower heaven), by *vidyā* one obtains the world of the gods", (*karmaṇā pitṛ-lokaḥ vidyayā deva-lokaḥ*). The significance of "the world of the gods" consists in its contrast with the "world of the fathers", and hence it is a symbolic expression for that which is co-ordinate with *vidyā*, i.e., *mokṣa*, or transcendent freedom. Therefore, it is added in the context, "the world of the gods is indeed the best of the worlds: therefore they praise *vidyā*" (*deva-loko vai lokānāṁ śreṣṭhaḥ tasmāt vidyāṁ praśaṁsanti*).

As in the Greek tradition so also in the Upaniṣads there is not a hint of opposition or even separation of *theōrea* and *praxis*. Further, as in the Greek thought, *theorea* was understood as the highest form of *praxis*, and besides, *theōrea* is its own *praxis*. As for words that may be seen as more or less equivalent to the two Greek terms we have in the Upaniṣadic tradition the concrete terms *darśana* or even *sāṁkhya* (for *theōrea*) and *sādhana* or even *yoga* (for *praxis*). But in order to avoid confusion it may be borne in mind that *sāṁkhya* and *yoga* later become names for specific philosophical schools, while, on the other hand, *darśana* began to convey increasingly the meaning of school or "system" of philosophy in general and *sādhana* came to be used more to mean the *modus operandi* of any religio-philosophical school whereby it seeks to realize those things it has set forth as spiritual goals.

As is quite clear by now, the Upaniṣads use the word *vidyā* philosophically. But they further specify the philosophical scope of *vidyā* as *Brahma-vidyā*, which is uniformly extolled, often directly but sometimes indirectly, i.e., as the remote and ultimate implication of the different kinds of *vidyās* or wisdom-pursuits. In one place (*Maitrī*, 2.3), *Brahma-vidyā* is simply set forth as "the wisdom of all the Upaniṣads", (*brahma-vidyā sarvopaniṣad vidyā vā*). Elsewhere (*Muṇḍaka*, 1.1.1), it is called "the foundation of all *vidyās*", (*brahma-vidyā sarva-vidyā-pratiṣṭhā*)." According to the Upaniṣads, philosophy is fundamentally the *theorea* and *praxis* ("theory" and "practice") of *Brahma-vidyā*. No doubt, it is Śankara who brings home this point later on in his commentaries with incredible rigour and consistency. For instance he observes, defining *Brahma-vidyā* thus: "It is being understood by the very use of the word *upaniṣad* that it signifies *Brahma-vidyā*."[48]

Now *Brahma-vidyā* principally applies to three things which most concern man's thought about Ultimate Reality, not just in the Upaniṣads but universally. These three things are Ultimate Reality itself, the world and our own selves. A later Vedāntic formula announces the result of thinking on them thus: "*Brahman* (the Ultimate Reality) is the Truth, the world is a fictional (although powerful) creation, and one's own self is *Brahman* itself and is nothing else" (*brahma satyam jagan mithyā jīvo brahmai'va nāparaḥ*). The Upaniṣads clearly live up to the declared interest in these, as their paramount concern. No doubt, *Brahman/Ātman* is their absolutely dominant theme, but the wisdom pertaining to it, i.e., *Brahma-vidyā*, is held as most relevant to thinking about the world and about our own empirical selves. It is questions about these two which appear first when we think about Ultimate Reality along with the question of Ultimate Reality itself. In the natural dispensation of thought they give rise to metaphysics of the world and metaphysics of the human self, or "psychology". And *Brahma-vidyā*, insofar as it is that whereby gnosis gathers and places in a new trajectory all thought that has to do with Ultimate Reality, allows full scope to the realization of that natural dispensation. That is how the metaphysical developments within Vedānta have occurred, and their foundations are in the Upaniṣads themselves. But these developments as such are not intrinsic or essential parts of *Brahma-vidyā*.

Brahma-vidyā is that wisdom which knows that *Brahman* is Ultimate Reality. In itself it is beyond metaphysics. But insofar as

man's thought cannot avoid its own potentiality for metaphysics, *Brahma-vidyā* offers itself as a ground for the expression and development of that potentiality, in which sense it is held as that whereupon metaphysical thought may find a new beginning. *Brahman* being perceived already, we may reflect on it metaphysically, that, is in relation to the world and in relation to the individual self. The Upaniṣads have already led the way in both these respects.

But here the absolute difference between the world and the individual self is something to be noted as being of crucial importance. In the great divide expressed in the above-mentioned formula the individual self is already on the side of, being one with, *Brahman*. The word for the world is *jagat*, from a root which means 'to move'. Therefore, it stands for what is essentially transitory, unstable and in a state of passage. The word for the individual self is *jīva*, from a root which means "to breathe". Therefore, it stands for what is living, in fact life itself. The living being and life are considered eternally real because in the great divide they are on the side of, being one with, *Brahman*, and are to be freed from bondage to what is merely transitory, unstable and in a state of passage.

The world, *jagat*, which by its very definition exhibits characteristics that are opposite in nature to that of *Brahman*, also produces the illusion that it is the ground of our being and of our knowing. For one thing, the world is based on desire, and is what encourages us to hope but is nevertheless always the frustration of desire and the wasting of hope; it is a promise which it is unable to fulfill. And for another, it is the region of fear and anxiety. If it gives us the illusion that it is the ground of our being and of our knowing it also indeed threatens us with the loss of being and shuts off from our view the region of knowing with a thick veil. For all these reasons, it calls for reflection as to what it is, why it is there and whether it is what it seems to be.

It is indeed possible to reflect upon the world with *Brahma-vidyā* or without it, and no doubt the results would be radically different. But reflection with *Brahma-vidyā* includes the gathering and the vicarious re-capitulation, through imagination, of the other way of reflection as well, which no doubt, it consciously transcends. According to this, the conclusion is reached: *Brahman* is what we know but do not know that we know, while the world is what we do not know but assume that we know. From this

point reflection on the world with *Brahma-vidyā* continues without abating – which is the model that prevails in Vedānta.

Reflection upon the world with *Brahma-vidyā* will bring two results, one of which will tell us that the world has its ground on what exceeds it, and the other will tell us that it *is not* what it appears to be, that is, it is *Māyā*. These two results must be taken as complementary to each other in the Upaniṣads' explanation of the world.

As to the first result, i.e., that the world is grounded on what exceeds it, the Upaniṣads tell us that the ultimate ground must be unravelled progressively. The matter is presented in a graphic dialogue between Gārgī and Yājñavalkya (*Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, 3.6.1). Gārgi beings: "As all this here is woven, like warp and woof, on water, on what, pray, is water woven, warp and woof". Answer: "On air, O Gārgī". The question continues with principle after principle (*devatā* in Śankara's terminology) replacing water and air till the world of Brahmāḥ (the creator god) is advanced as the ground. But from the fact that the questioning still continues it is clear that even the world of Brahmāḥ is not really to be regarded as the final ground. At this point the dialogue abruptly ends with both Yājñavalkya and Gārgī agreeing to be silent. Nevertheless, one section later (*Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, 3.8), the dialogue between them is resumed in a different vein, and here Yājñavalkya dramatically introduces the concept of *Akṣara*, translated 'imperishable'. Gārgī asks: "That O Yājñavalkya, of which they say it is above the heaven, below the earth, between these two, the heaven and the earth, that which the people call the past, the present and the future, across what is that woven warp and woof?" Yājñavalkya proposes space as the answer. But the question continues: "across what is space woven like warp and woof?" In response, Yājñavalkya declares:

> That, O Gārgī, the knowers of *Brahman* call the imperishable. It is neither gross nor fine, neither short nor long, neither glowing red nor adhesive, neither shadow nor darkness, neither air nor space, unattached, without taste, without smell, without eyes, without ears, without voice, without mind, without radiance, without breath, without mouth, without measure, having no within and without. It eats nothing and nothing eats it... Verily, at the command of that imperishable, O Gārgī, the sun and the moon stand in their appointed stations. At the command of that imperishable, O Gārgī, heaven and earth stand in their appointed stations. At the command of that imperishable, O Gārgī, moments, hours, days and nights, months, seasons, and years stand in their appointed stations. At the command of

that imperishable, O Gārgī, some rivers flow to the east from the snow-capped mountains and others to the west in whatsoever direction.

Yājñavalkya concludes with the final declaration "On this imperishable, O Gārgī is space woven, warp and woof," (*etasmin nu khalu akṣare, gārgi, ākāśa otaś ca protaś ca*).

A note may be added before we continue with the discussion of the concept of the imperishable. Now, the word *akṣara* translated 'imperishable' in this context and in a few more in the Upaniṣads is used essentially in the adjectival sense, with *Brahman* as that which *akṣara* qualifies either explicitly or implicitly. The complete term, therefore, is *akṣara-brahman*, as in *Kaṭha*, 1.3.2. However, the word *akṣara* is also used as a noun in the Upaniṣads, and indeed in the entire tradition, in another sense, that of letter, or syllable. The two must not be confused, although often they are. This latter usage is prevalent in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* as it is very much concerned with language – and no doubt in several others too – but the former usage (as the imperishable) is not found in that Upaniṣad at all. Now, while we must not confuse between the two usages, it is also useful to know that in a notable place in another of the Upaniṣads they are brought together. In *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, 2.2-4, we have an interesting instance. Stanza 2 begins with a description of the *Akṣara-Brahman* along the lines of Yājñavalkya's statement as quoted above, as what is "subtler than the subtle, in which are centred all the worlds, etc." It is identified with life, language and mind (*sa prāṇaḥ tad u vāṅmanaḥ*). Then follows a discussion of the famous *Aum* symbol of language. "Taking as the bow the great Upaniṣadic weapon one should place in it the arrow sharpened by meditation. Drawing it with a mind engaged in the contemplation of that, dear one, know that *Akṣara* (i.e., *Akṣara Brahman*) as the target." At this point there takes place an exposition of *Aum*.

However, there cannot be much doubt that the meaning "imperishable" is the original one and the meaning "letter" or "syllable" was later attached to the word. *Akṣara* is the opposite of *kṣara*, perishable, rather synonymous with *jagat*. The letter *a* as in *akṣara* is often used for negation. But negation itself is a multi-faceted device of language and logic, and accordingly, can signify many different things, as elaborately discussed in the *Vṛttis* on the *Vākyapadīya*, nos. 249-315. In this case here, it definitely signifies 'what is beyond', 'what exceeds'. As *kṣara* is to have the denota-

tion of the physical, *akṣara* could conceivably have some shades of the meaning of "metaphysics". But as we have said, *akṣara* to be meaningful must be followed by *Brahman* as what it is governed by. Now, "metaphysics", though not to be strictly so called here, is the outcome of reflecting on *jagat* under the horizon of *Brahma-vidyā*. Whenever this word *akṣara* occurs it should be known that *Brahman* as the metaphysical ground of the world is indicated. It is precisely for this reason that it is said in the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* (1.1.7) that the world is born of *Akṣara* (*akṣarāt sambhavati iha viśvam*). But by the word 'metaphysical' in the Upaniṣadic context we should not understand what is *per se* beyond the physical (*ta meta ta physica*), as in the origin of 'metaphysics' or the physical exceeding the physical after the fashion of what has been put forward as meaning by Heidegger, but rather as what is beyond, or what exceeds, the physical as the ground of the physical (*kṣara*). Clearly, the reason for metaphysics to be is the physical, for which, to begin with, it is the explanation. Therefore, to arrive at the imperishable, which is the highest principle in explanation of the ground of the world, is the first result of reflecting upon the world with *Brahma-vidyā*. But as Śankara insists, one does not come by such a principle through mere logical reflection upon the world but through having had the foundation of *Brahma-vidyā* beforehand, "as it always comes on its own accord (*āgamena*)."[49] The discursive doctrine (*vāda*) of *Akṣara* or, more properly, *Akṣara-Brahman* is, therefore, the first way of metaphysics for the Upaniṣads, in the sense that it is the first result of the reflection upon the world with *Brahma-vidyā*, "metaphysics" having to be understood as the explanation of the physical world in the light of a reality which not only exceeds it but is its ground.

The second way of metaphysics, that is, the doctrine of *Māyā*, is of the same importance as the first, and the two, as we have observed, must be taken as complementary to each other. No doubt, the discursive doctrine of *Māyā*, or *Māyā-vāda*, is the more radical of the two and, in fact, is a unique way of metaphysics, having no counter-part in any other tradition of philosophy. *Māyā-vāda* was fully developed and completely spelt out a long time after the Upaniṣads, by Śankara. It is commonly understood – rather misunderstood – to be a doctrine which holds the world to be illusory. It may be pointed out that this misunderstanding is nothing new, as in fact Rāmānuja, another great commentator of the Vedānta tradition, coming only three centuries after Śankara,

himself thought of *Māyā-vāda* to be a doctrine of illusion, and as such severely criticized it. However, if only modern supporters of Rāmānuja knew what he really says about the world they would then be wary because he actually says that the world is eternally existent, being eternally a part, (as body, or *śarīra*), of, *Brahman*. No realist or empiricist theologian would go that far. On the other hand, *Māyā-vāda* would go as far as realists and empiricists would want to go in their affirmation of the reality of the world – and none of them would treat it as eternal, as in fact the notion of eternity itself is in their thinking under oblivion.

As to the existence in seed form of the doctrine of *Māyā* in the Upaniṣads, whether one sees it there or not will depend on one's view of *Brahman*. A view which emphasizes the totally non-dual character of *Brahman* will incline one to see the doctrine of *Māyā* in seed form in the Upaniṣads – and this has been historically found to be the case. On the contrary, any other view of *Brahman* will make one averse to seeing it in the Upaniṣads – and this too has been historically found to be the case.

Clearly then, a rigorous non-dualism of the type of Śankara's has consistently put forth the doctrine of *Māyā* as a corollary to its view of *Brahman*, that is, as the only logically possible explanation according to it of the world and of human experience. The doctrine of *Māyā* simply lays down that what seems different from *Brahman* and seems to stand on its own is not in reality so but that it merely presents a distorted picture of *Brahman* itself. [On the contrary, all those who oppose *Māyā-vāda*, Rāmānuja, the Kashmir Śaivites and others, hold that the world gives a true but imperfect picture of *Brahman*.] Thus the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* (4.4.19) tells us: "There is no multiplicity here. He obtains death after death who sees it as if it (i.e., Reality) were many", (*naiha nānāsti kiṁcana mṛtyoḥ sa mṛtyum āpnoti ya iha nāneva paśyati*). This statement has traditionally been considered a bulwark of *Māyā-vāda*. The word *māyā* appears by itself or in compound with some other word in a few places in the Upaniṣads, the most important occurrence being in *Śvetāśvatara*, 4.10: "Know Nature to be *Māyā*", (*māyām tu prakṛtim vidddhi*). *Māṇḍukya*, 7 describes the highest state of consciousness (*turīya*) as "that into which the world is resolved", (*prapañcopaśamam*). In *Maitrī*, 6.24 there is that powerful metaphor of the world as a circle of sparks produced by the rotation of the fire-wheel (*alāta-cakram*), hence as a brilliant "appearance" of *Brahman* but only an appearance. This

metaphor is expanded later in *Gauḍupāda's Māṇḍūkya Kārikā*, 4.47-52.

The question as to why we see multiplicity (duality) when it is not there is raised in some places very seriously, and that becomes a very important metaphysical problem. As a solution there arises the idea of *ajñāna*, or *avidyā* (agnosis), which pervades the whole world as well as our consciousness. *Avidyā* is depicted as the root "evil" to be overcome. However, it is understood as the very seeing of duality. It is stated in *Maitrī*, 7.9: "Those who are wrapped up amid *Avidyā* imagining themselves to be alone wise and learned wander obdurately and deludely (through the transmigratory cycle) like blind men led by the blind", (*avidyāyām antare veṣṭyamānāḥ, svayam dhīrāḥ panḍitam manyamānāḥ dandramyāmānāḥ pariyanti mūḍhā andhenai'va nīyamānā yathā 'ndhāḥ*). Here again, we can perceive the latter "metaphysical" or discursive doctrine of *Avidyā*only in its sparse and bare seeds in the Upaniṣads although there are many descriptions particularly pertaining to gnosis, which contain it as an implication.

In the tradition which has flowed out of the Upaniṣads, i.e., Vedānta, the doctrines of *Māyā* and *Avidyā* go hand in hand. They are so complementary to each other that they are hardly distinguishable. But these doctrines along with all other "metaphysical" doctrines, which are only explanations, have been put forward by those who sought to interpret and systematize the teachings of the Upaniṣads, chiefly Śankara himself, not as if these doctrines bring home some truth of their own but merely as ancillary to the one all-absorbing concern of all, i.e., *Brahma-vidyā*, both the *theorea* and the *praxis*.

But it must not be thought that *Brahma-vidyā* is either negative or even indifferent towards all other philosophical pursuits. The Upaniṣads would only comprehend all these in *Brahma-vidyā* rather than exclude any. Accordingly, the world and human experience are taken with the utmost seriousness, and, based on *Brahma-vidyā*, are sought to be explained fully and adequately.

So then, the doctrines of *Akṣara-Brahman* and *Māyā* are the results of reflection upon the transitory world (*jagat*) with *Brahma-vidyā*, and are the two ways of "metaphysics" pointed to by the Upaniṣads. It may also be added that it is the fate of the former to have been absorbed into the latter in the Vedānta tradition, but there is no reason why it should be assumed that the former has lost its vogue altogether.

Now let us turn to the Upaniṣads' reflection upon *jīva* (the empirical self). It is important to perceive that while *jīva* in its phenomenal condition shares the transitoriness and perishability of *jagat*, in its real essence it is stable and eternal because it is one with *Brahman*. Reflection on *jīva* with *Brahma-vidyā* confirms the revelation of its identity with *Brahman*, and all the sense of its separateness and of its being part of the *jagat* is destroyed. How the sense of separateness of the *jīva*-hood of the *jīva* has come to be is also to be accounted for by the very principles by which we account for the world. In other words, the sense of separateness of the *jīva* is part of *jagat* while in its essence *jīva* is identical with *Brahman*.

Phenomenally, *jīva* is part of *jagat*. But that part of *jagat* which houses *jīva* in its separateness and individuality is altogether distinct from the rest because it touches the truth of *jīva's* identity with *Brahman*. Therefore, it has an unique status. It carries with it the illusion of being the reality of man's self-hood, his very subjectivity, as distinguished from all other things which are merely objects.

The Upaniṣads view the problem of our understanding of the nature of *jīva*, its essential identity with *Brahman* and its apparent separateness, embracing its individuality, not excluding its empirical constitution, as very important for the "theory" and "practice" of *Brahma-vidyā*. In this respect this understanding goes hand in hand with the understanding of *Māyā* and *Avidyā*. This is the supremely important matter of self-knowledge and a paramount concern of the Upanisads. That matter can in no way be doubted.

In the theme of self-knowledge both the truth of *jīva's* identity with *Brahman* and the fact of its apparent separateness are indicated. Weighing these two things properly is one of the implications of *Brahma-vidyā*. In a striking way it is the co-existence of both these that makes philosophy so exciting and challenging an experience according to the Upaniṣads. There is an on-going dialectic between these two poles, which grips the person engaged in philosophy in the way of the Upaniṣads. An important aspect of this dialectic is grasping the equivocal use of both the word *ātman* and the word *vijñāna* (understanding). The following celebrated passage bears witness to that:

For where there is duality as it were, there one smells another, there one

> sees another, there one hears another, there one speaks to another, there one thinks of another, there one understands another. Where everything has became the *Ātman* (Self, self), then by what and whom should one smell, then by what and whom should one see, then by what and whom should one hear, then by what and to whom should one speak, then by what and of whom should one think, then by what and whom should one understand? By what should one understand that by which all this is understood?[50]

The word *ātman* is used in the sense of the supreme *Ātman*, or *Brahman*, and in the sense of *jīva*. Later, the word *vijñāna* (understanding) is used in two senses, i.e., that of what is already an absolute possession of the knower and that of what is not yet so.

What is called by some scholars "psychology" in the Upaniṣads must be viewed in the light of this dialectic. No doubt, the Upaniṣads give much information on the subject of the *psychē* (to be taken in its original sense of soul rather than mind), but it would be a mistake to assume that they give the information for its own sake or in order to lay the foundation for "psychology" as such. For, as in all cases the ruling interest is the "theory" and "practice" of *Brahma-vidyā*.

Nevertheless, as *Brahma-vidyā* is taken with a gravity beyond compare everything that serves it must be characterized by a befitting rigour. Besides, as one's own *psychē* is the abiding field of one's cognitive and volitional activity and that which always simulates the thinking self, an almost infinite penetration and precision are brought to bear upon the investigation of it.

There are a number of different ways in which the task of comprehending the *psychē* is pursued in the Upaniṣads. One of the most impressive is through the simile of the chariot (*Kaṭha* 1.3.3-11). The body is the chariot (*ratha*), the *ātman* the Lord of the chariot (*rathin*), the intellect (*buddhi*) the chariot-driver (*sārathi*), the senses (*indriyāṇi*) the horses, and the mind (*manas*) the reign (*pragraha*). *Jīva* is defined in this simile as the *ātman* bound to the mind and the senses (*ātmendriya mano-yukta*) and it is called the experiencer (*bhoktā*). The purpose of this simile is to inculcate the same self-knowledge so central an aim in all the Upaniṣads, from a specific angle. Hence it begins with the admonition, "know the self as the Lord of the chariot" (*ātmānaṁ rathinaṁ viddhi*). Further, in self-knowing, the intellect (*buddhi*) plays the dynamic role. It is the intellect that has the power, by virtue of *Brahma-vidyā*, to convert itself into that special agency called understand-

ing (*vijñāna*) so that an individual becomes one for whom understanding is the chariot-driver (*vijñāna-sārathi*).[51]

The *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* (2.1-5) contains another interesting account of the make-up of the *psychē*, where man is described as being converged by five progressively interior sheaths (*kośas*: *anna-rasa-maya* (that of nutrion), *prāṇa-maya* (that of vital breath), *mano-maya* (that of mind), *vijñāna-maya* (that of understanding) and *ānanda-maya* (that of bliss). This is obviously an attempt to set forth the empirical human self (*jīva*) in a comprehensive way, in terms of all the possible levels of his existence. The innermost sheath is that of bliss, for it is said: "This indeed has the modality of a person. According to that, one's personal modality is one with the modality of a person", (*sa vā are puruṣa-vidha eva, tasya puruṣa-vidhatām, anvayaṁ puruṣa-vidhaḥ*).[52] [It may be borne in mind that even bliss is only a sheath. For this reason Śankara argues that our real self (what is one with *Brahman*) is interior to it too.]

The *Māṇḍukya Upaniṣad* gives us yet another account of "psychology" in terms of the four successive quarters, or levels, of consciousness: the waking state (*vaiśvānara*), dream state (*taijasa*), deep sleep (*prājña*) and the "fourth" state (*turīya*). Each of these is analysed for itself. However, it is the fourth that completes all the others, and the real character of the soul is manifested only in it. It is described thus:

> (It) is not that which cognizes things internal, not that which cognizes things external, it is not what cognizes both of them, not a mass of cognition, not cognitive, not non-cognitive, not seen, not to be empirically dealt with, not graspable, not possessed of distinguishing marks, not thinkable, not nameable. (It is) the essence of the knowledge of the one *Ātman*, that into which the world is resolved, peaceful, benign, non-dual. Such they think is the fourth (*cathurtha, turīya*). He is the *Ātman*. It is he who should be known.[53]

These above described passages are the most striking expressions of the nature of the *jīva* in the Upaniṣads. Clearly, they are reflections upon that stable entity, which we empirically know as ourselves and which counterposits *jagat*, the transitory actuality of the world, and the reflection in both cases is undertaken with *Brahma-vidyā*, in the "theory" and "practice" of which they constitute important ways, although it is not possible to argue that they themselves make up *Brahma-vidyā*. In a sense there need be no possible limit to the number of such ways. The Upaniṣads

themselves put forth many suggestions, and in principle no possible way is precluded as long as it directly contributes to the "theory" and "practice" of *Brahma-vidyā*.

CHAPTER III

GNOSIS AND PHILOSOPHICAL THOUGHT IN THE BHAGAVADGĪTĀ

[The *Bhagavadgītā* is one text in the Vedānta tradition that has suffered from there having been too many interpretations on it rather than too few. It is Śankara who first claimed this text for the Vedānta's gnosis tradition of philosophical thought, and his interpretation has been challenged over the centuries, including our own. In the present chapter we seek to claim it again for the gnosis tradition and to show that, while it touches life in the raw, thereby serving as a Vedānta text in a unique way with an appeal to all conditions of men, it nevertheless does not fail in its central mission *vis-à-vis* philosophical thought grounded in gnosis.]

The *Bhagavadgītā*, or the *Gīta* for short, is one of the most truly amazing philosophical poems in world literature. Literally translated, the title means the *Song of the Blessed One*. The poem is a dialogue between Kṛṣṇa, venerated in epic, mythology and popular piety as a divine personage in human form, an *avatāra* (descent) of God (hence called *Bhagavān*, or the Blessed One), and Arjuna his human kinsman and pupil, supposedly taking place in the battlefield of Kurukṣetra. What we are about to enter into is a dialogue with this dialogue.

The *Gītā* has held the greatest fascination for religious minds, traditionally in the land of its origin and more recently all over the world. Its narration is captivating and its teaching re-assuring and comforting without being either sentimental or unduly stern. It gives back to every man his soul, his intelligence, his self-reliance and initiative, and for that reason alone those who wish to enter into the religious quest in a philosophical way would find it immensely attractive. Besides, its freedom and catholicity of spirit strikes a sympathetic cord in those modern men who are even vaguely interested in things of the spirit.

The poem forms part of the gigantic epic, the *Mahābhārata*, inserted into it as an episode of one of its books, the *Bhīṣmaparvan*. The poem is short, consisting of only 700 stanzas, arranged into

18 chapters, equal to chapters 25-42 of the *Bhīṣmaparvan* of the epic (and chapters 23-40 of the newly brought out Critical Edition by the Bhandarkar Research Institute, Poona). Although a philosophical poem, the *Gītā* is set in the context of the great Bhārata war which is the subject of the epic, or perhaps fitted into it by some literary device. Therefore, the battlefield of Kurukṣetra where Arjuna the commander of the Pāṇḍavas (who are on one side of the context, the Kauravas being on the other), leads his army, accompanied by Kṛṣṇa his advisor, figures in the narrative as the venue of the dialogue as also the scene of the impending battle. However, the likelihood of an intense philosophical discussion taking place as the armies are preparing for a final and decisive assault need not be raised lest we be deflected from the principal course of trying to understand the teaching. None of the traditional interpreters were deterred by that issue, and there is wisdom in following their example.

In the division of authoritative Indian religious texts, the *Gītā* is included in the secondary class called *smṛti* (those that are remembered), because it is officially part of an epic, while the primary class, *śruti* (those that are primevally "heard" by the ancient seers) contains only the Vedas, in which are included the Upaniṣads. Yet the *Gītā* is elevated above all the other *smṛti* texts, and given honour and authority equal to *śruti* itself.

Each of the 18 chapters of the *Gītā* ends with a colophon, (probably added later) which calls the poem an upaniṣad, and this designation clearly reflects the position accorded it in the tradition. How interesting that it should be put officially under the *smṛti* class and yet be regarded in actuality as tantamount to an upaniṣad! This represents an important phenomenon as far as religious texts go. It bespeaks the fact that in part the *Gītā* is closer to our way of thinking. The man Arjuna raises questions from a historical, human situation somewhat as we would today, and in that sense it is a product of the historical human mind, determining the style of thinking and the manner of the discourse of the text. It touches life in the raw. And yet the content and the event of the teaching make it like an upaniṣad and hence is in essence not a product of the historical human mind. Śankara, the author of the oldest of the existing commentaries, goes so far as to describe the *Gītā* as "the quintessence of all the Upaniṣadic (Vedic) teachings".[1] Other traditional commentators have tacitly accepted this estimate.

Now, as to the modern problem of assigning to the *Bhagavadgītā* either a purely religious or a philosophical character, opinions can be expressed on either side. S. Radhakrishnan, in his book on the *Bhagavadgītā* starts out by saying that it is "more a religious classic than a philosophical treatise". However, such a distinction is hardly feasible from within the text itself. No doubt, it is a religious classic. But we must not understand by "religious" here something exclusive or categorically distinguishable from philosophy. The *Gītā* is religious because "religion" is the foundation of all things great in this world. It would have been absurd for a text which speaks for that which is the greatest to disregard religion, in view of the fact that there can only be artificial, and hence inauthentic, reasons for doing so. "Religion", with all its admitted defects, in the *Gītā's* understanding at least, has always been associated with the quest for that which is the greatest. Therefore, the disregard of it can only come from some deep-rooted lack of reality in one's thinking. "Religion" is not something introduced, as it were from outside, into a spiritual enterprise that has to do with what is great as it is rather intrinsic to such a thing. Understood in this way, the *Gītā* is undoubtedly a religious classic. In terms of our thought on profound questions it is not necessary or even desirable to go on at a tangent and treat religion as a phenomenon in itself (which it also is in other respects) as we only need to take it as an acid test to determine the reality of our thought. The thing that mars our thinking is always some lack of reality in it – the more deep-rooted the worse – and the fundamental problem is how to resist it and bring reality back into our thinking. Ancient philosophical traditions such as Vedānta and Platonism are aware of it. Vedānta tries to deal with it as ethical qualifications for a student, but the word "ethical" must be understood as having to do with reality in our thinking, which is the same as maintaining an attitude of truthfulness towards reality. This attitude may be considered like the prevenience of gnosis, as pre-dawn light, and its basis ultimately is in Reality itself rather than in purely human thought.

In view of the immense intellectual and emotional appeal of the *Gītā* it is but natural that there should be a prolificity of literature pertaining to it. For that reason, it would be appropriate to make a brief survey of the important studies on this text. Not only are there several classical commentaries in Sanskrit but there are also books written on it in the regional languages of India as well as in modern European languages, especially English. Most of the books in the Indian regional languages, however, are usually personal expressions of piety, although an occasional work has turned out to be philosophically challenging as in the case of the *Gītārahasya* of Bal Gangadhar Tilak (originally written in Marāṭhi).

The commentary by Śankara is the oldest of the existing ones. We know that there were other commentaries before his time and that there were a large number of different interpretations prevalent in his day. These facts we gather most of all from a single observation that Śankara himself makes in justification of his attempt to write a commentary. He writes: "Even though the meanings of words and sentences (of the *Gītā*) have been explained by many (writers), to the people of the world it appears to teach absolutely contradictory doctrines. Hence I am setting about to write a succinct exposition (of it) in order to determine its meaning."[2]

In his interpretation of the *Gītā, Śankara* adopted the approach of his own gnosis (*jñāna*) philosophy, more thoroughly and systematically expressed in his commentaries on other Vedānta texts, i.e., the *Brahma Sūtra* and the principal Upaniṣads. As far as we know it is he who first accepted the *Gītā*, along with the *Brahma Sūtra* and the Upaniṣads, as one of "the three foundations" (*prasthāna traya*) of Vedānta, a practice followed by all the traditional exponents ever since.

The next important commentary was written by Rāmānuja, although in fact he followed the main line of interpretation given by a great predecessor, Yāmuna. Rāmānuja was basically a theologian of personalist Vedāntic theism. As in his commentary of the *Brahma-Sūtra* and his single volume exposition of the Upaniṣads as a whole (*Vedārthasaṁgraha*), so in his interpretation of the *Gītā* he unequivocally adopted the devotional standpoint consistent with his own personalist theism. It is clear that on the surface at least the *Gītā*, as also one of the Upaniṣads, the *Śvetāśvatara*, gives

support to it. In fact Rāmānuja considers the theistic theme the *Gītā* already expressed in a *Śvetāśvatara* passage (5.1), which runs as follows: "In the imperishable *Brahman*, transcendent and infinite, there lie hidden the two, namely gnosis and agnosis. Of these (the one, namely) agnosis is perishable, while (the other, namely) gnosis is immortal. (But) he who rules over gnosis and agnosis is another".[3] In Rāmānuja's theology this "another" who is above gnosis (simplified and assigned to the realm of the Spirit *à la* the Sāṁkhyan dualism) and agnosis (likewise simplified and assigned to the realm of Matter) owns and rules over them even as a person's spirit owns and rules over his soul and body. The foundation of the entire structure of this theology is the application of this simple but none-too-simplistic analogue. Some modern Christian scholars of Eastern religions appear to feel a very close kinship with Rāmānuja's version of Vedānta while they turn away with a sense of horror from Śankara's. Superficially viewed, this will appear to be justified. Rāmānuja outlines his position as not only the better but the truer alternative to Śankara's, which is characterized as rigorously non-dualistic in ontology, gnosis-centred with respect to the path to liberation and dominated by the theory of *Māyā* (illusion, as often mistakenly understood) in regard to the status of the world. The main thrust of Rāmānuja's arguments is rebuttal of what he takes to be Śankara's doctrines. Accordingly, he elevates devotion (*bhakti*) directed to the personal God (Viṣṇu, Nārāyaṇa, Kṛṣṇa), rather than gnosis as such as the path to liberation (*mokṣa-mārga*).

For some reason the mind of traditional scholars, with the exception of Śankara himself, seems to have revolved around the problem of paths to liberation, and the *Gītā* served as the pre-eminent single text on which the proponents of the different so-called paths could rest their case. However, it is actually a matter of foisting the phenomenon of the three-fold thematic division of the paths, or *mārgas*, on the *Gītā*. And it is not unlikely that the whole concept of *mārga* was due to Buddhist inspiration. [The word *mārga*, however, is from the verb *mṛg*, to hunt, and from *mṛga*, deer. It is, accordingly, a word which expresses a hunting imagery, and originally meant hunting trail or deer path.] The *Gītā* itself speaks of gnosis, devotion, action and many other things like meditation (*dhyāna*), renunciation (*saṁnyāsa*), etc., and the colophons describe each of the 18 chapters as a particular *yoga*. The example for thematization of the *mārgas* was first set by

Rāmānuja who even favoured the division of the 18 chapters of the *Gītā* into three arbitrary groups of six chapters (*ṣaṭaka*) each, under gnosis (*jñāna*), devotion (*bhakti*) and action (*karma*). Preoccupation with the three paths became general ever since, and up to this day no interpreter has been able to break away from it. However, it is true that Śankara (*à propos Gītā*, 9.3), refers to devotion as one of the various paths (*mārgabheda*), but purely to warn against what is its opposite, namely the path of the mortal world (*mṛtyu-saṁsāra-vartma*), the path leading to perdition (*naraka-tiryagāti-prāpti-mārga*). It is true that the three paths express something essential in the Indian religious phenomenon and would have commanded attention even without the catalytic agency of the *Bhagavadgītā*. But they can hardly occupy an intrinsic place in philosophy even when philosophy takes the question of liberation seriously.

Like Rāmānuja, a number of medieval commentators, Madhva, Nimbarka, Vallabha, Śrīdhara, *et al.*, favoured a devotion-centered interpretation, while a few like Madhusūdana Saraswatī and Jñāneśwar tried their hand at skillfully combining the path of devotion with the path of gnosis, however the concept of path still predominating. Their writings, particularly those of the last two, are very rich in mysticism but are not productive for philosophical thought.

As for the path of action (*karma-mārga*), in the medieval times it was for the most part subsumed under devotion. But before and during Śankara's own time there were interpretations that advocated a combination of gnosis and action (technically called *jñāna-karma-samuccaya*). And actually, it is in our century that a would-be traditionalist has come forward in the person of Bal Gangadhar Tilak to advocate an interpretation strongly favouring the path of action. In all these the path concept dominated, with very little interest in thought as such.

Tilak wrote a gigantic tome called *Śrīmad Bhagavadgītā-rahasya* (the *Secret of the Bhagavadgītā*) subtitled *Karma-yoga-śāstra* (the *Teaching of the Path of Action*), in Marathi, soon translated also into Hindi and English. Actually, it is a revival of the ancient approach of *jñāna-karma-samuccaya* in a modern setting where action is presented as an ethico-political programme rather than as ritualistic works which was the case with the ancient *karma*-philosophy. Nevertheless, Tilak bases his interpretation on the traditional *karma*-philosophy of Pūrva-mīmāṁsā against which

Śankara had directed his powerful critique.

Further, Tilak introduces an element that is entirely foreign to the Pūrva-mīmāṁsā goal of salvation through ritualistic works, but he does so by employing some of the principles of textual interpretation of that school. That element is the goal of secular freedom attained through secular action. The Mīmāṁsā principles of interpretation are seven, of which those of commencement (*upakrama*) and conclusion (*upasaṁhāra*) are considered the most important.[4] Accordingly, Tilak finds that the *Gītā* starts out by posing the problem of the duty of fighting a just war and ends with a clear perception of the nature of that duty. He seems to be persuaded that the power conflict in which Arjuna as a just warrior is involved must be taken as decisive in seeking the meaning of the *Gītā*. No doubt, the description of an ultimately important crisis situation confronting the man Arjuna permeates the text. That no one can deny. Traditional commentators of earlier times were not, however, troubled by this question and so did not attempt to answer it. Also, some modern writers on the *Gītā* like Mahatma Gandhi, not willing to follow Tilak's lead, sought to interpret the war allegorically as an internal, spiritual conflict. An important tradition of interpretation in favour of such an approach has come into being.

Yet another alternative presents itself to us and that seems to make more sense than the others, and hence is preferable. According to that, the human crisis situation must be taken as real and not as a mere allegorical expression of a spiritual conflict, but one that is only triggered by the actuality of battle and is by no means co-extensive with it. The destiny of the battle and its resolution have nothing any more to do with the crisis once it has been triggered into being, as it becomes a philosophical matter that cannot be restrained from moving towards gnosis. In this manner we can think of it as being typical of all problematics which find their way into thought. Do not historical and personal happenings, even bodily happenings, bring in their train deeper problems wrapped up in them? But those problems continue to challenge us even after the happenings might have been resolved not only in actuality, but even in potentiality. Seen in this light, Arjuna appears definitely to be a representative thinker, not only a confused man of action paralysed by despondency, and he is occupied with the problematics to which his particular involvement in a fratricidal war has painfully awakened him, in other words, having been

touched by life in the raw. Being thus occupied, he is led, seemingly unwittingly, but in fact quite deliberately, into the deepest philosophical questions. Let us hold in abeyance the elaboration of this approach till we reach the appropriate juncture. In the meantime, let us briefly survey some of the more notable modern studies on the *Gītā*.

The most remarkable book on the *Gītā* written in modern times is *Essays on the Gītā* by Sri Aurobindo. Aurobindo is a great mystic thinker, who through his many well-known writings, has worked out a complete thesophy, including a scheme of mystical life and practice without any comparable parallel in our day. The scheme is known by the name "Integral Yoga". The *Essays on the Gītā* is one of the clearest and most eloquent expressions of this powerful theosophy.

In the metaphysical part of the theosophy Aurobindo divides up Reality into different levels, correlated to levels of consciousness. Fundamentally, he believes that the *Gītā* is a synthesis of Vedānta, Sāṁkhya and Yoga, which he equates with knowledge, works and devotion. He observes: "Such is the analysis, not confining itself to the apparent cosmic process but penetrating into the occult secrets of superconscious Nature, *uttamam rahasyam*, by which the Gītā founds its synthesis of Vedānta, Sankhya and Yoga, its synthesis of knowledge, works and devotion."[5] Clearly, Sri Aurobindo has not escaped the conventional thematization of the *Gītā* teaching into the three paths, which he deals with at length in Book I, Ch. VI.

Aurobindo's interpretation of the *Gītā* is a most important modern testament of a dynamic mysticism and can be matched only by his own *magnum opus, The Life Divine*. He sees the *Gītā* as the manual of an integral programme of Yoga as much for the soul's ascent as for the World Spirit's descent for the sake of the transformation of the cosmos. This programme is seen as the grammar of ascent of an internal-external spiritual epic, with an enormous emphasis laid on self-culture at all (both normally recognizable and not so recognizable) levels of human existence, both individual and corporate. But the question is whether such a programme, however powerful the spiritual epic it unfolds and however stupendous the scheme of its self-culture, adds up to that which we strain after, i.e., thought, although theosophy it is. No doubt, those who are already believers would consider it to be the greatest philosophy or even to be higher than philosophy. For us

the question can be answered only on the basis of what thought is in this theosophical programme. Thought in this programme, we see, is taken as a complexly integrated psycho-metaphysical activity, based on the combining of the psycho-material realm of *Prakṛti* (Matter) and the spiritual realm of *Puruṣa* (Spirit). Insofar as Aurobindo creates a monism which combines these two, thought is but the language of the self-unfolding and self-realizing movement of the Spirit, in its passage to the supra-mental level. Thought, accordingly, is nothing but a stage of the development of the spiritual epic and as such the programme itself cannot be approached from any of the grounds from which thought is approached, and hence essentially remains outside thought, except in its instrumental role, which is purely transitional.

The idea that the *Gītā* is a work that has synthesized the many elements of Hindu, nay mankind's, religious beliefs, forging a universally relevant religious philosophy, has gripped several Indian thinkers of modern times. Among them S. Radhakrishnan is worthy of special mention. His study of the *Bhagavadgītā* is a work of great merit. He observes:

> The different elements which, at the period of the composition of *Gītā*, were competing with each other within the Hindu system, are brought together and integrated into a comprehensive synthesis, free and large, subtle and profound. The teacher refines and reconciles the different currents of thought, the Vedic cult of sacrifice, the Upaniṣad teaching of the transcendent Brahman, the Bhāgavata theism, and tender piety, the Sāmkhya dualism and the Yoga meditation.[6]

Accordingly, Radhakrishnan presents the *Gītā* as a book of universal spiritual value. So he writes:

> The suggestions set forth in the *Gītā* about the meaning and value of existence, the sense of eternal values and the way in which ultimate mysteries are illumined by the light of reason and moral intuition provide the basis for agreement in mind and spirit so very essential for keeping together the world which has become materially one by the universal acceptance of the externals of civilization.[7]

Radhakrishnan, too, considers his philosophy to be one of "integral experience", but somewhat differently from Sri Aurobindo's, insofar as he does not envisage any stupendous scheme for lifting human consciousness and human existence to a higher level from the present through creative guidance of the evolutionary-involu-

tionary process. Rather, he is content to discover and utilize the highest common factors of all the religious traditions of mankind, and he believes that the *Gītā* is precisely the text that can help us do so. Further, as a true representative of the post-Rāmānuja Indian religious tradition he assumes that the *Gītā* thematizes the three paths to salvation and argues that the secret of integral experience consists in grasping the synthesis which that text itself has already accomplished.

Apart from scholars who wrote from within the tradition, there are also indologists and scholars of religion who have written books on the *Gītā*. These range from pure indologists concerned only with historical and literary questions, like Franklin Edgerton to Rudolf Otto, a Lutheran religious philosopher, and R.C. Zaehner, an English Roman Catholic historian of religion and writer on mysticism. Otto wrote a highly analytic work translated as *The Original Gītā*, where he sought to show that the nucleus of the text was the famous vision recorded in the eleventh chapter around which the other parts later grew. Zaehner in his extremely articulate book on the *Gītā* shows impatience with the Indian commentators, ancient and modern (with the exception of Rāmānuja), because he believes that they mixed up what they thought with what the *Gītā* thought, and shows equal impatience with the Germans like Otto who are obsessed in characteristic fashion with some *Ur-Gītā*. Zaehner, on the contrary, counts himself among those who are "primarily interested in the actual content of the *Gītā*"[8] that is to say "in what the *Gītā* actually said, not in what others said or what they said in pristine times *not* said".[9] One could only wish that things were as simple as this!

Zaehner studied the book from the point of his dominant, even obsessive, interest in the mystical phenomenon as well as personalist theology. He denounces Śankara's Commentary (and Śankara's whole philosopy) because he considers it to be faulty mysticism insofar as it elevates to the level of highest reality the non-dual, supra-personal (or impersonal) *Brahman*. As for the *Gītā* he has come to the conclusion that it is a supreme text-book of good mysticism. So he observes:

> As I grew increasingly familiar with the text of this wonderful book, it became even more insistently clear to me that here was a text the whole purpose of which seemed to me to demonstrate that love of a personal God, so far from being only a convenient preparation for the grand unitary

> experience or spiritual 'liberation' (the *mokṣa* or *mukti* of the Upaniṣads and the *Vimutti* of the Buddhists) was also the crown of this experience itself, which without it must remain imperfect.[10]

Zeahner believes that in this mysticism the personal God is Kṛṣṇa himself rather than the impersonal *Brahman*. Hence he adds, marking his agreement with the French scholar Etienne Lamotte, the author of *Notes sur la Gītā*:

> Contrary to what one might suppose, the return of the soul into *brahman* is not yet the final stage (terme definitif) or at least the exact expression of perfect deliverance. Krishna, who has supplanted *brahman* both in theodicy and cosmology now surpasses it in eschatology too: it is union with Krishna, the Bhagavat, which is the Ultimate and final stage of deliverance.[11]

While denouncing Śankara, Zaehner speaks approvingly of Rāmānuja who probably comes nearest to the mind of the author of the Gītā." Clearly, this affinity that Zaehner feels towards Rāmānuja is well-grounded as far as the personal divine is concerned. But it has to be recognized that the latter still remains a non-dualist Vedāntin although of a qualified kind. The complexity of that would be quite beyond the range of the simplistic theism so belligerently expressed by Zaehner.

THE *GĪTĀ* AND *BRAHMA-VIDYĀ*

The fact that the oldest known commentators of the tradition unanimously agreed that in respect of the teaching the *Bhagavadgītā* is entirely in accord with the Upaniṣads and that that teaching must be taken as *Brahma-vidyā* has to be treated with some respect, and not just owing to the incidental colophic description at the end of each chapter which declares it to be such. We have already quoted Śankara's remark about the *Gītā* being the quintessence of the Upaniṣadic (Vedic) teaching. Also, in a medieval work, the *Vaiṣṇavīya Tantrasāra*, there is a passage likening the Upaniṣads to the cow, Arjuna to the calf, Kṛṣṇa to the milkman and the *Gītā* to the milk,[12] although it is possible that this metaphor may simply be reflecting an estimate which had already been well established.

However, there is no evidence at all to show that the *Gītā* has any historical links with the Upaniṣads as we know them, other than in respect of the identity of the teaching. Kṛṣṇa nowhere refers to any of the teachers of the Upaniṣads except incidentally to the sage-king Janaka, mentioned in *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, and in a different way referred to in the Epic *Rāmāyaṇa* as the father of *Sītā*, the wife of the divine warrior-king Rāmā. At the beginning of the fourth chapter of the *Gītā* Kṛṣṇa makes out that the teaching he, as the timeless teacher-God, had himself originally given to Vivasvān, who handed it to Manu and thus down through posterity till it somehow disappeared from the earth. Even the lineage of personages mentioned there, through whom the teaching had been transmitted, has nothing to do with any of the lines of succession described in the Upaniṣads. Thus in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (2.6.1-3; 4.6.1-3 and 6.5.1-4), with slight variations in the names of the individuals in the succession, the teaching is ultimately traced to Brahmāḥ the creator-God of mythology and popular belief. Likewise, again, in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (3.11.4 and 8.15.1) Brahmāḥ figures as the original source of the teaching. In the *Gītā* Kṛṣṇa wholly supplants Brahmāḥ in this capacity. The traditional commentators paid scant attention to the teacher or the lineage of transmission as, it seems, it is the teaching and not either of these that decides what is to be taken as *Brahma-vidyā*, which they regard as the essence of the *Gītā*.

The Gītā as an Upaniṣad for the Man Facing a Crisis, Touched by Life in the Raw

One of the most remarkable features of the *Bhagavadgītā* is that the occasion for its utterance is an unusual human crisis that a man faces, well described in the first chapter and at the beginning of the second and echoed throughout. It would appear that such an occasion was worked into the text as a literary context so as to fit the *Gītā* into the epic *Mahābhārata* as an episode of the war. That does not contradict the fact that the occasion may well have been provided by some actual human situation, that of an impending, disastrous conflict. The human situation brought wrapped up within it seeds of thought which could not be cast aside as soon as a resolution was found for the critical human situation, even if that were possible.

According to the graphic description of the situation, Arjuna, the legendary warrior and the exemplary upholder of the celebrated *Kṣatriya* kinghtly code which was the bulwark of *dharma*, has drawn up his army in the field of the Kurus where he is to commence the last and decisive battle against the Kauravas, who also happen to be his kinsmen. He surveys the enemy ranks and espies many who are his own clan elders and former teachers whom fate has now called him to annihilate. He is stricken with anguish and falls into a mood of colossal despondency at the thought that he is to be the channel through which much terrible death and destruction are to be visited upon the community. So he begins to reason that is is better for him to give up his own claim to the kingdom, rightful though it be, and if necessary even court death as a consequence. The tragedy he would like to avoid is not only physical but also moral as he sees it, and by avoiding it he would spare himself unbearable remorse in future.

Arjuna figures in the epic as the archetypal noble man (*ārya*), the highest embodiment of *Kṣatriya* manhood and the upholder and defender of justice (*dharma*). His character essence as defined by the knightly code is valour and compassion. In the *Gītā* description of Arjuna's anguish in the battlefield we have in all the world's literature the finest expression of the inward sufferings of the noble warrior. Arjuna came to the battlefield for the purpose of defending with his sword that foundation of social and cosmic justice called *dharma*. Yet he now fears that the defence of *dharma* in the manner in which fate has thrust upon him would, paradoxically enough, mortally wound and disrupt *dharma*. The quandary is, how can one avoid destroying that for the ostensible defence of which one is to fight a battle, or what is graver and subtler, how can one avoid confusing justice with the ends of one's own selfish desire for gain and the motive of vainglory, even though one may rationalize them? Hence he exclaims: "Alas, what a great evil have we resolved to do in striving to slay our foes through our greedy desire for the joys of (possessing) the kingdom!"[13] He is willing to give the victory to the enemy at the risk of his own life, and hence throws away his famous bow, *Gāṇḍīva*, formerly given him by the warrior-god Indra himself.

Arjuna the exemplary warrior noble man is facing the ultimate moral crisis and describes himself as "one whose mind is terribly confused as to what is morally right" (*dharma-sammūḍha-cetaḥ*).[14] In fact the noble man's morality itself is in crisis, which is the result of drawing together all the contradictions inherent in it.

It is interesting, incidentally, to contrast this "noble man's morality" with what Nietzsche calls "slave morality". It is the former that is peculiarly susceptible to such a crisis, while the latter is not at all so susceptible and hence holds a ferocious strength within itself. Nietzsche tells us that slave morality is rooted in *ressentiment*, that is to say, the secretly nourished reaction of the weak against the strong, which when the opportunity is ripe breaks out in bitterness and hostility, not just against the strong but by extension against the wider world. Is it not for this reason that ideologies based on *ressentiment*, being free from contradictions which afflict the noble man's morality, are relatively more successful in the world in the short run at least? Certainly Arjuna is not a candidate for success in any ideological conflict, any more than, given his sensitivity, he is likely to win a dynamic war of succession. The noble man is doomed from within himself because he embodies the inner ethical contradictions of a just war, while the enemy devoid of those contradictions has an ideological advantage which is the same as the very having of ideology. Nevertheless, Arjuna is being steadied at the level of the noble warrior's existence and is admonished not to give the victory to the potential ideologue's "slave morality". Comparing slave morality with noble morality Nietzsche has this to say:

> While every noble morality develops from a triumphant affirmation of itself, slave morality from the outset says No to what is "outside", what is "different" and this No is its creative deed. This inversion of the value-positing eye – the need to direct one's view outward instead of back to oneself – is the essence of *ressentiment*: in order to exist slave morality always first needs a hostile external world; it needs physiologically speaking hostile external stimuli in order to act at all – its action fundamentally is reaction.[15]

However, we see Arjuna as a different kind of noble man who is not content to ask for the sources of free action undetermined from outside in a way that becomes his character, but as one who is cast into a mood of thought, a mood which expresses itself immediately as a negative urge to escape all that he sees as action. Such escape from action appears to him as the only resolution to the conflict-ridden actuality of the situation that he is confronted with. But the range of the problematics that have been stirred up in him is by no means controlled by that contemplated resolution. For, the choice at the lower level, i.e., whether to act in accor-

dance with the knightly code, of which he is the embodiment, or not to act at all, still remains. And that has to be resolved according to its own inherent law and has nothing at all to do with philosophy. That choice still confronts him and will keep on doing so all the way even when he is engaged in the highest quest. Kṛṣṇa addresses him at that level too, speaking as if he himself has assumed the actuality of Arjuna the warrior. The traditional commentators like Śankara have warned us against viewing that part of Kṛṣṇa's exhortations – appealing to Arjuna's duty to fight the war – as having anything to do with the teaching.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE *GĪTĀ*: THE FUNDAMENTAL OUTLOOK

The *Gītā* takes off from the initial description of Arjuna's crisis in a vertical manner, abruptly and expeditiously as it were. We have already hinted at the fact that Arjuna's crisis awakened him to thought, on the surface about his own predicament vis-à-vis *dharma* but in fact going much deeper, in a way unknown to himself. By giving words to his grief on account of human mortality Arjuna, Kṛṣṇa tells him, is speaking wise words: "grieving for those who need not be grieved for thou speaketh wise words", (*aśocyān anvaśocas tvaṁ prajñā vādāms ca bhāṣase*), *Gītā*, 2.11a. However, Arjuna has so far spoken nothing that can be directly construed as wisdom. It would, therefore, seem that the expression of grief, which is the deepest actuality of human existence, is itself something that has to do with wisdom, inasmuch as it touches the question of Ultimate Reality, self-descrepant though the manner be. Over against this, Kṛṣṇa sets up the non-self-descrepant attitude of those who know (*panditāḥ*), for they "lament not for those who have passed and those who have not passed", (*gatāsūn agatāsūṁś ca na anuśocanti*), 2.11b.

From this point on, Kṛṣṇa leads Arjuna to think (of Ultimate Reality) in accordance with the way gnosis itself behaves. The second chapter, described by the colophon as *sāṁkhya-yoga* in verses 12 through 30, provides an initial expression to the way one should think about Ultimate Reality insofar as the provoking factor of thought here is the existential problem of human mortality and the anxiety which accompanies it. Clearly, there are many

ways in which this problem itself can be resolved, no doubt with corresponding implications to one's view of Ultimate Reality, and they can range all the way from nihilism to gnosis of the Vedāntic kind. There is no automatic reason for preferring the latter unless it institutes itself, to do so, however, being the first thing we note about the way it behaves. And thus gnosis takes the first step in raising thought towards itself. The initial expression of the way one should think on this matter begins with the statement: "Never have I not been, nor thou, nor these leaders of people; and none among us will hereafter not be", (*na tu evā'haṁ jātu nā'saṁ, na tvaṁ ne'me janādhipāḥ; na cai'va na bhaviṣyāmaḥ sarve vayaṁ ataḥ param*), 2.12. This is followed by a number of assertions of the indestructibility of the soul and of its unoriginatedness, with the refrain that one should not sorrow on account of that ontologically non-significant transition called death. Arjuna is summoned to view the destiny of embodied beings *sub specie aeternitatis* and thus to become free from anxiety.

Clearly, this view is only an alternative – one among many – that speculative thought may choose, although it is the most reassuring one. In order for it to be what Vedānta intends, this view has to be grounded in a deeper and self-certifying understanding of the Self, or *Ātman*. Speculation meets with it only by stumbling on it, causing the speculative thinker to be astonished. Therefore, the text says: "One meets with it as astonishing, another speaks of it as astonishing; even after hearing no one whatsoever knows it", (*āścaryavat paśyati kaścid enam, āścaryavat vadati tathai'va cānyaḥ, āścaryavat cai'nam anyaḥ śṛṇoti; śrutvā'pi enaṁ veda cai'va kaścit.*), 2.29. This is, no doubt, encounter with gnosis itself but the astonishingness of that which is encountered continues to dominate the situation of thought and it lies in the fact that, although met with, spoken and heard, it is what is not *yet* known in the way other grounds of thought (either natural or ontological) are known.

Speculation stumbling on gnosis is a useful imagery. We can also liken speculative thought, that is, thought which is on the "look out", to an alert dog which scents an intruder and barks and wakes up the owner of the house. Gnosis comes like an unexpected stranger. We do not know the hour and manner of the stranger's coming but we will know when the dog barks and wakes us up. Speculation can be an activity that scents gnosis and with its own excitation can arouse the thinker.

Thought conducting itself in accordance with the way gnosis itself behaves is *Brahma-vidyā*, or the wisdom which has to do with *Brahman*. In many places in the *Gītā*, particularly in the second chapter which introduces *Brahma-vidyā* the word used for expressing it is *sāṁkhya*, but its use is invariably misunderstood by most writers on this text. The same wisdom or *vidyā* as it is carried over to the extended realms of *praxis* to the very terminus, i.e., action or *karma*, is designated by the companion word to *sāṁkhya*, i.e., *yoga*. Have these terms, *sāṁkhya* and *yoga*, used in the *Gītā* anything at all to do with the dualistic systems known by these names? Śankara for one says 'no'. The question and the answer apply also to some of the Upaniṣadic statements, one in particular in the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*, 6.13, which speaks of "the one among many" (*eko bahūnam*), "the eternity of eternities" (*nityo nityānām*), "the intelligence of intelligences" (*cetana cetanānām*), "that cause" (*tat kāraṇam*), "reached by means of *sāṁkhya* and *yoga*" (*sāṁkhya-yogādhigamyam*). In his *Commentary on the Brahma Sūtra* (2.1.3), Śankara adverts to this Upaniṣadic passage and observes: "In this statement, which is Vedic (i.e. Upaniṣadic) the words *sāṁkhya* and *yoga* denote gnosis and meditation respectively, as is to be inferred from their proximity (i.e., context). We will [of course] gladly allow those parts of the Sāṁkhya and Yoga systems which do not conflict (with the Upaniṣads)."[16]

However, on the surface the weight of evidence seems to be against what we have just said. How so? Let us consider the numerous occurrences of the words *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* which stand for the two central principles, or *tattvas*, of the Sāṁkhya system (accepted by the Yoga system also) and the detailed analysis of the three *guṇas* (strands) which constitute the second of these, viz., *Prakṛti*, or Matter. Add to that the obvious prevalence in the text of the typical ideas associated with Yoga. Now, the very word *sāṁkhya-yoga* as a hyphenated compound in relatively modern terminology appears in the colophon as the descriptive theme-name of the second chapter. This kind of evidence has persuaded many a scholar to consider the *Bhagavadgītā* to have some special connections with the Sāṁkhya and Yoga systems (which were hyphenated as a single twin system in later times). A well-known Indologist of the past, Richard Garbe, has gone as far as to argue that the *Gītā* was originally a Sānkhya-Yoga work, into which elements of the theistic Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva cult was poured and was later adapted to the requirements of Vedic religion.

Now, the principal error in this kind of assumption is this: a one-to-one correspondence between concepts and particular nomenclatures achieved much later in history is imposed upon an early text which was composed before such a correspondence came about. One of the most important facts to be borne in mind is that in the earliest Vedic and Vedāntic texts, and indeed in the commentaries too, terms were employed rather fluidly without that rigorous fixity of usage as we would expect to be the case in contemporary discourse. But what was really fixed is the inner world, or meaning as we would say. An inner world could be conveyed by a number of different synonymous terms, which again in other contexts could be synonyms of other terms with other meanings. This is the reason why total interpretation, or *mīmāmśā*, is so very essential even to get at the meaning of terms, and it would be most undesirable to go about the business the other way around as literal-minded historians and philogists seem to do. Through interpretation we can introduce order into the realm of the terms according to meaning so that understanding of the text could be facilitated.

As we have shown, the initial statement of *Brahma-vidyā* in the second chapter covers the wisdom, both under the aspect of pure gnosis and as it is carried over to the realms of *praxis*, and these are respectively designated by terms *sāṁkhya* and *yoga. Praxis* is more clearly restated in verses 38 through 55. In the meantime there is an interregnum, to which we must turn.

Stanzas 31-38 constitute an appeal to Arjuna's self-esteem as a warrior to "take up arms and fight", although that self-esteem is on the verge of crumbling. [Such exhortations are scattered throughout the whole work.] Śankara states quite correctly that these stanzas reflect only "worldly considerations" (*laukiko nyāyaḥ*) and are "not" part of the teaching "as matters intended" (*na tu tātparyeṇa*). We must only assume that through the mouth of Kṛṣṇa Arjuna's own warrior self is made to speak and to assert itself, thus forestalling its premature disintegration and demise. And surely, the wise teacher himself as companion assists Arjuna in this regard. And we find this motif appearing again and again throughout the text, interspersed with *sāṁkhya* and *yoga*.

Stanza 39 marks the point of transition where *yoga*, i.e., the theme of carrying over *Brahma-vidyā* to the realms of *praxis* commences, in addition to *sāṁkhya*, or gnosis as such, with the words: "This is the theme of *sāṁkhya* that has been taught thee, now

listen to the theme of *yoga*", (*eṣā te'bhihitā sāmkhye; budhir yoge tu imāṁ śruṇu*).

These two, i.e., *sāṁkhya* and *yoga*, are the fundamental themes of the *Gītā* and they dominate the entire text. They are mentioned together in 3.3 as two kinds of *niṣṭhā* (a word always wrongly translated "path" but might be better translated as "resolute observance"). Let us render that stanza as follows:

> In this world O Arjuna two kinds of resolute observance (*niṣṭha*) have been declared of old by me: resolute observance of gnosis as such (*jñana-yoga*) for the knowers (*sāṁkhyānām*); resolute observance of active effort [towards gnosis] (*karma-yoga*) for the effort-makers (*yoginām*). (*loke'smin dvividhā niṣṭhā purā proktā mayā'nagha; jñānayogena sāṁkhyānām karmayogena yoginām*).

Now, the word *yoga* has the concise meaning of effort, in the sense of a totally unicentred effort towards the highest and yet the most concrete of all spiritual goals. From hoary antiquity it has been gathering this meaning and the Yoga system but crystalizes it. However, it is based on a natural standpoint which requires the distinction between subject and object, sin and virtue and the sense of oneself being a doer and enjoyer. Śankara defines *yoga* as "that which consists in the performances of actions as a means to liberation, requiring a knoweldge of virtue and sin and the assumption that the self is distinct from the body as also the sense of being a doer (of action) and enjoyer (of fruits)."[17] According to this definition, what is elsewhere known as Śāṁkhya system also must, strangely enough, come under the caption *yoga* as against what is set forth by the term *sāṁkhya* (= gnosis as such) in the language of the *Gītā*. It is in the light of this that we must understand the statement by the teacher of the *Gītā* that he had declared the resolute observance of active effort to the *yogins*, or effort-makers, and that of gnosis as such to the *sāṁkhyans*, or knowers. The generic meaning of *yoga* as effort, that is to say, unicentred effort towards the highest of human goals is modified in the *Gītā* in such a way as to reflect the fact that gnosis carried over into the area of active effort, be it that of thought or any other that is germaine to the definition of man as *puruṣa*, is decisively significant. Therefore, while *yoga*, or effort-making, in its generic definition would be radically distinct from *sāṁkhya*, or gnosis as such, in the new definition the former is perceived as that which has been charged with a destiny to "lead to", or more appropriate-

ly, clear the way for the latter. This truth is stated obliquely in 2.49: "Verily resolute observance of active effort is far inferior to the resolute observance of gnosis as such...; in gnosis as such take refuge...", (*dūreṇa hi avaraṁ karma buddhiyogāt ... buddhau śaraṇam anviccha...*). Śankara makes the meaning clear when he remarks on this: "The meaning is, 'therefore seek refuge in the wisdom of *yoga*, that is to say, the wisdom of *sāṁkhya*, which arises when *yoga* attains to maturity', in other words 'seek knowledge of Ultimate Reality'".[18] What Śankara means is that resolute observance of active effort is that which is charged with the destiny of clearing the way for the resolute observance of gnosis as such. The realization of such a destiny is what is meant by the term *siddhi* (attainment) associated with resolute observance of active effort, which in the *Gītā's* terminology is expressed by such various terms as *karma, karma-yoga* and *karma-niṣṭhā*, or often just by the term *yoga*. Hence Śankara explains *à propos Gītā*, 18.48: "It has been said that the *siddhi* reached by *karma* consists in attaining fitness for the resolute observance of gnosis as such."[19]

These two resolute observances, variously expressed (in various contexts) respectively as *jñāna, jñāna-yoga, niṣṭhā* and *sāṁkhya* for the one, and *karma, karma-yoga, karma-niṣṭhā* and *yoga* for the other, are alone distinctly recognized in the *Gītā* [*jñāna-yoga* for the knowers and *karma-yoga* for the effort-makers]. There is no third mentioned. So then, what about *bhakti*, in view of the so-called three-path scheme? We read about no resolute observance (*niṣṭhā*) pertaining to it. Accordingly, we have to conclude that the status of *bhakti* is different, not being a subject of resolute observance itself, though belonging to both gnosis as such, i.e., *sāṁkhya*, and to the effort, i.e., *yoga*, that goes with gnosis. Hence we have *bhakti-yoga* as one of the many dimensions that constitute the grand horizon of the *Gītā* as we shall soon see, and in a sense even the highest – and in a horizon which is intrinsically religious it cannot be otherwise.

Śankara, who wrote long before the three-path scheme was introduced follows the *Gītā* in strictly confining his interpretation to the two *niṣṭhās* (i.e., resolute observances, not understood as paths), and, no doubt, in doing so he conforms to genuine orthodoxy as laid down by the Mīmāṁsās. And orthodoxy does not envisage the possibility of holding *bhakti* (devotion) as an independent standpoint of exegesis or as an absolute basis of religion. Inas-

much as Rāmānuja approached both exegesis of texts and religion from *bhakti* he tried to break new ground, and for that reason his orthodoxy has always been a subject of debate. Śankara, on the other hand, worked within orthodoxy, even in his exaltation of gnosis at the expense of *karma*, or the totality of ritualistic and other auxiliary actions in accordance with Vedic injunctions. Accordingly, the choice was restricted to the two *niṣṭhās*. Śankara, while redefining both, advocated an unconditional and unqualified acceptance of gnosis as that which alone is in agreement with the nature of Ultimate Reality and final release (*mokṣa*). And he clearly called for the rejection of *karma* as what is not in harmony with Ultimate Reality and with final release. Nevertheless, he permitted a conditional, qualified and tentative use of *karma*, strictly under gnosis, but only as a dependent basis of religious and moral life and not as a standpoint of exegesis. Therefore, his approach to *karma-niṣṭhā*, unlike his approach to *jñāna-niṣṭhā*, is one of "no" to *karma* and "yes" to it in a qualified sense and of a transvaluation of *karma-niṣṭhā* eventually, (as distinguished from *karma* in the primary sense). Now, it is easy to see why he vehemently criticized some interpretations of the *Gītā* prevalent in his day, which gave equal standing to gnosis and to *karma* and considered them to be co-ordinate, expressing the position known as *jñāna-karma-samuccaya*, the word *samuccaya* implying exactly what we have just said, i.e., giving equal place to *jñāna* and *karma* and considering them as co-ordinate. This doctrine (*vāda*) Śankara vehemently criticizes on several occasions, particularly under *Gītā*, 2.10, a verse which simply marks the fact that Kṛṣṇa is there beginning his philosophical teaching (and again under 18.66). Śankara feels that the record must be set straight before ever entering into the teaching. However, it must be noted that even when Śankara says "no" to *karma*, he is actually only rejecting the authenticity of *karma*-philosophy, in view of the fact that such a thing existed then, and has always existed in the world of philosophy. Clearly, he is not saying "no" to *karma* as a fact of life and as a fact of nature. But he is denying to *karma* an intrinsic sphere of thought, which it claims, for thought belongs solely and singularly to gnosis.

THE TEACHING ABOUT THE TWO OBSERVANCES EXPANDED INTO A COMPREHENSIVE HORIZON

The teaching of the *Gītā* concerns the resolute observances of gnosis and active effort, the latter being understood as expression, concrete actualization and practical support of the former. They are not co-ordinate, because *karma-niṣṭhā* is entirely subordinate to *jñāna-niṣṭhā*. The contradiction comes only when they are held as co-ordinate, or even worse, when the subordinate becomes the superordinate, i.e., when it seeks to replace gnosis with some knowledge which results from human activity.

The teaching is expanded into a whole, comprehensive horizon, beginning with the third chapter of the *Gītā*. The horizon is coalescent with existence itself and *is* one of existence. It is formed of the dynamic substance of religion and morality and is put forth so as to be grasped and interiorized by thought. The horizon is formed by means of the deployment of a number of constitutive dimensions one after another. They are put forth by critically refining ideas and forces very much at work in the moral and religious life with which the text is in contact.

All along, while deploying these dimensions the *Gītā* frequently reiterates the essence of the teaching. As for the teaching, gnosis is regarded as the principal, and in fact the only, stream. The streams of *karma* are like rivulets and, no matter what their origin, must flow into gnosis: that is their authentic destiny. "All *karmas* without exception fulfill themselves in gnosis", (*sarve karmākhilam jñāna parisamāpyate*), as the *Gītā* itself says (4.33). The horizon as a completed whole not only covers and absorbs the entire world of moral and religious life but also makes it a cosmos by letting gnosis percolate into it. Here another aspect of *karma's* destiny is established, which is to be the path-clearer for gnosis. Thus, commenting on the words of the *Gītā* (4.42): "Take recourse to *yoga* (i.e., resolute observance of active effort, under gnosis) and stand up", (*yogam ātiṣṭho 'ttiṣṭa*), Śankara states: "It means that one must devote oneself to *karma* insofar as it is *the yoga* that clears the way for gnosis", (*yogaṁ saṁyag-darśanopāyaṁ karmānuṣṭhānaṁ kurvītyarthaḥ*).

This represents a radical transformation of *karma* (or *yoga*) and it lays the foundation for the teaching to expand itself into a comprehensive horizon. Now, there are many important dimensions,

some of which are primarily dimensions of Reality and others are those of life-endeavour and thought-endeavour. The colophons often give clues to them. And yet they are all impartially subjects of both *theorea* and *praxis*. Thus to give emphasis, we not only can *see* the world-reality coming out of God and we *see* God as the Self of the world, but we also can *practise* them. We practise renunciation and we can also approach it as something to be grasped through seeing. To use a more convincing example, the Good that we see is also the good that we practise. The *Gītā* itself takes note of it in one instance when it explains the meaning of the word *sat*, comprehending both the meanings "Good" and "good", and more.

> For the Good/Reality/Being and for the good as practised this (i.e., the word) *sat* is used; also for praiseworthy action the word *sat* is employed, O Arjuna. (*sadbhāve sādhubhāve ca sad iti etat prayujyate; praśasthe karmaṇi tathā sacchabda pārtha ucyate.*), *Gītā*, 17.26.

Before the whole horizon is articulated the *Gītā* wants us once more to take a clearer look at gnosis. For that reason a restatement of it is given in Chapter 4.

Then let us turn to these various dimensions. These dimensions are treated as the principal themes of the chapters to follow (i.e., chapter 5 onwards), which are renunciation (*saṁnyāsa*), meditation (*dhyāna*), understanding (*vijñāna*), devotion (*bhakti*), discrimination (*vibhāga*, or *viveka*) and so on.

The dimension of renunciation (saṁnyāsa)

Accordingly then, first, (in Chapter 5) renunciation is unveiled. It is recognized that even the *praxis* of gnosis, insofar as it is active effort, involves a mode of action. But that mode of action exists which is entirely compatible with gnosis, and that is renunciation-action.

> He who acts, having relinquished (*tyaktvā*) attachment, resting his actions on *Brahman*, is not touched by sin (*lipyate na pāpena*), even as a lotus leaf (is untouched) by water. (*brahmani ādhāya karmāṇi sangam tyaktva karoti yaḥ lipyate na sa pāpena padmapatram ivā 'mbhasā.*), Gītā, 5.10.

The discourse on renunciation is carried over into the beginning of the 6th chapter, where (in the second stanza) renunciation is equated with active effort (*yoga*): "What they call renunciation

(*saṁnyāsa*) that know to be yoga". Further on, in 18.2, a special definition is offered: "The sages regard renunciation as the giving up of actions prompted by desire", (*kāmyānām karmāṇām nyāsaṁ saṁnyāsaṁ kavayo viduḥ*). The very stanza also adds that this is the same as relinquishment (*tyāga*). There is a culprit and it is identified as imagination (*saṁkalpa*), which is a kind of false creative power. Renunciation is directed against it. Śankara points out that from imagination spring all desires (*samkalpa mūlā hi serve kāmāḥ*)[20] as well attested by Manu and the *Mahābhārata.*[21] This is the reason why *Gītā*, 6.2 adds to what was cited above: "No one ever becomes a *yogin* who has not renounced imagination," (*na hy asaṁnyasta saṁkalpo yogī bhavati kaścana*).

Renunciation is, therefore, a particular *yoga*, an active effort representing the obverse of usual effort, and is to be understood as that which is left over when desire has been removed from all actions, while it is itself not an action, either positive or negative, for if it were it would contradict itself. It has being only in reference to all actions while it is itself not an action. The predication of renunciation on all other actions is what the *Gītā* means when it states (4.17), "the course of action runs deep", *gahanā karmaṇo gatiḥ*. [There is no other mystery in this statement, as some writers assume.] However, the active form of the word reflects the pervasive condition to which all human consciousness and language are subject. Hence it has the appearance of an activity. Śankara explains the predicament through a simile: "Activity is falsely attributed to the Self reflecting the egotistic feeling conveyed by the expression 'quiescent and *doing* nothing I sit happy' just as a person travelling in a boat sees the trees on the river banks moving in the opposite direction, although motion really does not pertain to the trees".[22] However, in the world of man's spiritual behaviour renunciation has a certain symbolic compatibility with gnosis, which no action has. Hence it is considered ideally akin to gnosis.

The dimension of meditation (dhyāna)

The dimension of meditation (*dhyāna*), briefly outlined in 5.27 and 28, is more fully unfolded in the 6th chapter. It begins with the insistence on "shutting out all external thoughts", "fixing the vision between the eye-brows" and "equalizing the in-breath and the out-breath", (*sparśān kṛtvā bahir bāhyāṁś cakṣus cai'vā'ntare bhruvoḥ*), 5.27. In the 6th chapter meditation is simply called *yoga*

as if it is the paramount *yoga*. [This style is followed in describing each and every dimension in its context.] But its claim to be considered *the yoga* derives from a connection that possibly existed even in hoary antiquity and was well exemplified in later times by the Yoga system of Patañjali.

Following the already traditional view of *yoga* (continued later by Patañjali), the *Gītā* believes in the complete absorption not only of the mind but also of the body into the task of meditation, not so much in the sense of a means of realization so-called as, in fact, in the sense of a thorough-going self-testimony to total commitment that meditation itself symbolizes. And indeed it offers symbolic resistance to what lies at the root of mental tardiness and physical laxity.

Meditation is thought, the highest kind. It is highest thought we say but only in the sense of an activity that approaches receptivity, which is the essence of what really is thought inasmuch as thought is the extension of gnosis. The activity is only what we see of thought from the near side and it indeed dissembles what it is on the far side. As we have learnt already, if thought is the extension of gnosis, gnosis is the disposition of Ultimate Reality (i.e., of *Brahman/Ātman*). The steadiness, the concentration, the joy and the assurance of thought (here called meditation) rest on this fact. Hence the *Gītā* says:

> As a lamp in a windless place flickers not, to such a one is likened the meditator (*yogī*), who has mastered his thought, who in meditation (*yogam*) has become united with the *Ātman*;
>
> That in which thought has no other notion, restrained on account of the service of meditation (*yogasevayā*), where, beholding the *Ātman* through the *ātman*, In the *Ātman* he rejoices;
>
> That in which he finds this supreme delight, grasped by intelligence and beyond the senses, where, (thus) standing he no longer falls away from the Truth;
>
> That upon gaining which no other gain does he conceive to be greater, wherein standing not even by heavy sorrow is he moved;
>
> Let this disconnection from union with sorrow be known by the name of *yoga*; with certainty should be practised this *yoga* with heart undismayed.

(yathā dīpo nivātastho ne'ṅgate so'pamā smṛtā yogino yatacittasya yuñjato yogam ātmanaḥ;

yatro'paramate cittaṁ niruddhaṁ yogasevayā yatra cai'vā'atmanā'tmānam paśyann ātmani tuṣyati;

sukham ātyantikaṁ yat tad buddhigrāhyam atīndriyam vetti yatra na cai'vā'yaṁ sthitaś calati tattvataḥ;

yam labdhavā cā'paraṁ lābhaṁ manyante nā'dhikaṁ tataḥ yasmin sthito na duḥkhena guruṇā'pi vicālyate;

taṁ vidyād duḥkhasaṁyoga-viyogaṁ yogasaṁjñitam sa niścayena yoktavyo yogo'nirviṇṇacetasā.), *Gītā*, 6.19-23.

The dimension of understanding (vijñāna)

Chapter 7 ushers in the dimension of understanding. It is an anticipated outcome of meditation. Understanding, it is made clear, is possible through the First Principle, which is always one and the same, although the phenomena in which it is enfolded are diverse. The teacher of the *Gītā* speaks of it in the first person singular, as himself. Thus:

I am the taste in the waters, O Arjuna, light in the moon and the sun; I am the *praṇava* (*AUM*) in all Vedas, the sound in space, manhood in men.

The good odour in the earth and brightness in fire am I; I am the soul in all beings, and the power that burns in the ascetics.

Know, O Arjuna, that I am the eternal seed Of all beings; I am the intelligence of the intelligent ones, I am the splendour of the splendid.

I am the strength of the strong which is devoid of lust and passion, while I am the just desire in beings, which does not conflict with *dharma,* O Arjuna.

(raso'ham apsu kaunteya prahbā'smi śaśisūryayoḥ praṇavaḥ sarvavedeṣu śabdaḥ khe pauruṣaṁ nṛṣu.

puṇyo gandhaḥ pṛthivyāṁ ca tejaś cā'smi vibhāvasau jīvanaṁ sarvabhūteṣu tapaś cā'smi tapasviṣu.

bījam māṁ sarvabhūtānāṁ viddhi pārtha sanātanam budhir budhimatam asmi tejas tejasvinām aham.

balaṁ balavatāṁ cā'haṁ kāmarāgavivarjitam dharmāviruddho bhūteṣu kāmo'smi bharatarṣabha.), *Gītā*, 7.8-11.

Understanding has for its realm that which is controlled by the First Principle, the cause and the source of the universe, and hence what is called aptly by the name 'metaphysics'. However, it is maintained in the *Gītā* that though it is necessary for the mind to order all things around the First Principle, the First Principle itself is beyond understanding. "Me no one knows", (*māṁ tu veda na kaścana*), 7.26. That which is beyond understanding, nevertheless, communicates itself. Hence the significance of couching it in the first person singular pronoun (I, me, my) but in the way permitted only for the First Principle. Men make the quest for it with all their mind, with all their heart and with all their strength. Therefore, the quest is tantamount to worship and men set up what they arrive at as a deity (*devatā*). Men who are dead earnest pursue their quest with attentive reverence (*śraddhā*, a word not altogether adequately translated 'faith') as befits religious worship and no doubt their quests are justified rather than condemned by reason of their reference, however remote, to the hidden First Principle which can be only communicated by itself. "Whatever form any worshipper (seeker) with attentive reverence (*śraddhā*) wishes to worship I make that attentive reverence of his steady" (7.21). The truth is, while there is abundant basis for men to seek the First Principle (and earnest men actually do) there is no basis for them to really understand it, because that which moves them to the quest (not lightened to any one, *na prakāśaḥ sarvasya*) is a veil that confuses them in that it is the First Principle's own "creative" *māyā* (7.25).

The concept "First Principle" itself means that it is the Ultimately Real, as approached through phenomena. Understanding, therefore, is the grasp of the Ultimately Real through phenomena, and accordingly metaphysics is its realm, the meaning of the word to be literally taken as that which is beyond Nature (*meta ta physica*), signifying the fact that Nature (the world of phenomena) is its approach route.

The dimension of imperishable Brahman

Chapters 8-10 unravel the realm of metaphysics, because they describe Ultimate Reality (*Brahman*) in terms of its distributive presence in the universe of multiplicity. The description follows

first of all the pattern made classic in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (3.6.1, etc.), that is, as the imperishable *Brahman* (*akṣara Brahman*), contrasted with the perishable character of things. Hence the imperishable *Brahman* constitutes the topic of the 8th chapter. [A discussion of imperishable *Brahman* as constituting the realm of metaphysics is to be found in our chapter on the Upaniṣads.] The teacher of the *Gītā* declares:

> What the knowers of the Veda call the imperishable, which ascetics free from passion enter, aspiring for which they walk environed in *Brahman*, that state I shall briefly declare to thee.
>
> (*yad akṣaraṁ vedavido vadanti viśanti yad yatayo vītarāgāḥ yad icchanto brahmacaryaṁ caranti tat te padaṁ saṁgraheṇa pravakṣye.*), *Gītā*, 8.11.

[The different use of the word *akṣara* meaning the syllable *AUM*, in 8, 13, must not be confused with this, but, as we observed in the context of the Upaniṣads, the two uses have an indirect relation too.]

The dimension of deepest mystery (guhyatamam)

In chapter 9 the metaphysics of imperishable *Brahman* and along with it understanding move into another dimension which is indicated by the term 'deepest mystery', *guhyataman* (stanza 1), and the term 'sovereign mystery', *rājaguhyam* (stanza 2). This is where understanding verily merges with gnosis, the way of which the teacher is going to declare, as stated in the very opening stanza:

> This, the most hidden (truth) I shall declare to thee, who are not inclined to cavil: gnosis [it is] together with understanding, by knowing which thou shalt be released from the inauspicious.
>
> (*idaṁ tu guhyatamaṁ pravakṣyāmi anasūyave jñānaṁ vijñāna sahitaṁ yaj jñātvā mokṣyase'śubhāt.*), *Gītā*, 9.1.

It is a mystery because it does not follow the law of understanding and is not something that logically issues from understanding even in the pursuit of the First Principle expressed as imperishable *Brahman*. And yet it is a mystery for the opposite reason also, that is to say, although not according to any expectation of speculation, i.e., that which is on the "lookout", understanding does indeed merge with gnosis. Hence it must be seen that understand-

ing functioning in this way has the character of thought provoked by gnosis, of thought as the extension of gnosis. Mystery remains a mystery to thought in that gnosis continues to have to be recognized as a given, what could have come about only the way it has come about and in no other, in other words, only due to the revelation of the holy. And consequently the Reality revealed in this dimension remains concealed to that understanding which does not yet participate in gnosis. The particularity of a revelation, such as is the characteristic mode of the *Gītā's* teaching, calls for this peculiar companionship of gnosis and understanding, just as the revelation itself brings it about. This is a very special aspect of the thought which is the extension of gnosis. There is here a decidedly theistic character to the disposition of Ultimate Reality which is for us gnosis, and that character is expressed by the expression the *Gītā* uses here, i.e., "my divine *yoga*", (*me yogam aiśvaryam*), 9.5. And this too is a mystery, of which thought by itself cannot give an account. And because it is a matter of Ultimate Reality's own disposition expressed in a decidedly theistic, revelatory context, there is no way it can be expressed in language except by attributing to Ultimate Reality the character of first person (I, my, me, etc.). Śankara gives another reason for the use of these first person pronouns, that is "as a mere adoption of the world's mode of understanding" (*lokabuddhimanusaraṇ*).[23]

The dimension of [self-] manifestation (vibhūti)

The mystery is further pursued into the dimension of the [self-]-manifestation (*vibhūti*) of Ultimate Reality, in chapter 10. Also, the [self-] manifestation is the completion of the truth regarding the First Principle (as the imperishable *Brahman*) taken up in chapter 8 now that the dimension of the mystery of the particular and the unique has already interposed. Therefore, the instances of the presence of the imperishable *Brahman* in all parts of Nature and in all occurrences are re-counted here, now to be viewed in the light of Ultimate Reality's own [self-] manifestation. Thus:

> Of the world-epochs, I am the beginning and the end and also the middle, O Arjuna; of *vidyās* I am the spiritual *vidyā*; of those who speak dialectically I am the dialectic.
>
> Of the syllables I am the letter A; of compounds I am the dual; I am inexhaustible Time; I am the ordainer whose face is the cosmos itself.

(sargāṇām ādir antaś ca madhyam cai'vā ham arjuna; adhyātmavidyā vidyānāṁ vādaḥ pravadatam̐ aham.

akṣarāṇām ākāro'smi dvandvaḥ sāmāsikasya ca; aham evā'kṣayaḥ kālo dhātā'haṁ viśvatomukhaḥ.), *Gītā*, 10.32,33.

Towards the end of the chapter (10.40) Kṛṣṇa announces: "There is no end 'to my divine manifestations' (*divyānāṁ vibhūtīnāṁ*)", and adds "they are only described as 'illustrations' (*uddeśataḥ*)".

Now a brief comment on the word which we have translated as manifestation, or self-manifestation, namely *vibhūti*, may be made. The literature of the Yoga system has used it very differently. The third of the four chapters of Patañjali's *Yoga-Sūtra* is called *vibhūti*, a designation probably introduced by the ecommentary *Tattva-Vaiśāradī* of Vācaspati Miśra. The word is employed in the Patañjali tradition in the sense of super-normal powers that a practioner of Yoga is able to master. And that meaning clearly accords with the text of the *Yoga-Sūtra*. [Other related Yoga traditions also use the word in that sense.] However, *vibhūti* of the *Gītā* has nothing to do with such powers, as it actually stands for the unique [self-]revelation of Ultimate Reality as it relates to thought.

The dimension of devotion (bhakti)

Now comes the 11th chapter, which depicts one concrete, dramatic manifestation to Arjuna, for the sake of visually underscoring all that has been declared upto that point. And it also marks the transition to another dimension of apprehension beyond the metaphysics of understanding. It is that of devotion expressed by the word *bhakti*. This is the highest dimension and hence Śankara describes it as the essence of the whole teaching of the *Gītā* (*Gītā-śāstrasya sārabhūto'rtha*)[24] to which one is taken through the vision described in the 11th chapter, of Kṛṣṇa appearing before Arjuna in a splendid theophany of his cosmic form. This theophany introduces devotion (*bhakti*).

The dimension of devotion as has already been briefly introduced in the last stanza of this 11th chapter is then more fully stated in the following chapter which the colophon calls by the name *bhakti-yoga*. Śankara, commenting on 11:55 seeks to correct a wrong, popular notion about devotion in respect of the *Gītā*. The stanza speaks of "my devotee who serves me and looks upon

me as his ultimate goal (*mat-karmakṛn matparamo madbhaktaḥ*)." Clarifying it, Śankara states, "A servant serves his master but does not look upon that master as his own ultimate goal. But "My devotee" works for "me" and looks upon "me" as his (own) ultimate goal."[25] The master, or the Lord (*Īśvara*) is none other than the Self. The ability to look upon the Self itself as the Lord, purged of the servility that normally pertains to the servant-master relation, is the true test of devotion, and it is to that dimension to which one is ushered.

> Greater are the troubles of those whose mind is set on the Unmanifest [than those who worship me], for, the way of the Unmanifest is hard to gain for the embodied beings.
>
> (*kleśo 'dhikataras teṣām avyaktāsaktacetasām avyaktā hi gatir duḥkaṁ dehavadbhir avāpyate.*), *Gītā*, 12.5.
>
> [The Unmanifest stands for pure imperishable *Brahman.*]
>
> On me alone fix thy mind; let thy intelligence dwell in me; in me alone shalt thou abide henceforth. As to this there is no doubt.
>
> (*mayy eva mana ādhatsva mayi buddhiṁ niveśaya nivasiṣyasi mayy eva; ata ūrdhvaṁ na saṁśayaḥ.*), *Gītā*, 12.8.

Devotion simply strengthens the ground of man's metaphysical existence by taking it beyond the purview of the understanding that has yet not learnt to consort with gnosis. Metaphysical existence requires constant exercise in what results from understanding's consorting with gnosis, namely self-knowledge. Therefore, it is necessary that philosophical thought that is generated from gnosis returns periodically to all the realms of natural thought as well as of life for the sake of gathering their finest fruits and of placing them on its own trajectory. For this reason the *Gītā* now ushers us into certain dimensions, all of which are generally characterized by the attribute of discriminate wisdom or *viveka* as that has been, it is to be noted, the special vocation of the historical Sāṁkhya system to specialize in but also has been an intrinsic part of Vedānta. These dimensions are described in chapters 13-17. So, to these we shall now turn.

The dimension of fundamental discrimination

This dimension is described in the 13th chapter which enshrines

the primary but all-too-easily-forgotten distinction (*vibhāga*) between the field (*kṣetra*) and the field-knower (*kṣetrajña*). The substance of this is stated thus:

> The field and the field-knower, those who with the eye of gnosis perceive their difference and the deliverance of beings from Nature, they attain to the Transcendent.
>
> (*kṣetrakṣetrajñayor evam antaraṁ jñānacakṣuṣā bhūtaprakṛtimokṣaṁ ca ye vidur yānti te param.*), *Gītā*, 13.34.
>
> [Note: 'the eye of gnosis' is an expression which does not yet mean gnosis.]

The knower is eternal and unchanging (namely, the Self as the Lord) and is in no way in bondage to the cosmos of becoming (*saṁsāra*). But the fact that, on the contrary, it appears to be so is due to agnosis (*avidyā*). Śankara explains correctly: "Thus it cannot be imagined that the knower of the field, the Lord, though [present] in all fields can have even the odour of becoming."[26] The exercise in self-knowledge as the essential character of metaphysical existence is meaningful only insofar as it signifies our overcoming a natural hindrance caused by the conditions of our phenomenal existence as it is given to us. In fact, the knowledge that such and such is the nature of existence as given is also the result of this exercise. In other words, that which is to be apprehended through discrimination is already prefigured in existence. We are obliged to give an account of the cosmos, that is to say, of becoming (all that arises), as it is the situation in which self-knowledge has to operate. As Śankara makes it clear, "all that becomes is due to the conjunction of the field and the field-knower".[27]

Discrimination between the field and the field-knower is an act of thought but of the thought that is grounded in gnosis. Nevertheless, it is an act and so much so cannot be a rejection of that source of all acts or becoming, namely the conjunction of the field and field-knower. Therefore, that particular act of thought is referential to this conjunction.

Philosophical thought in Vedānta, as we have already seen developing, is thought conducting itself in accordance with the way gnosis itself behaves. There is no doubt about this. But the regions in which thought so conducts itself are there by virtue of the afore-mentioned conjunction. So thought can establish its conduct

only by keeping an eye on the way Nature (*Prakṛti*) itself behaves and by depositing the understanding it thus gains in the account of self-knowledge. The dynamic character of thought, that is to say, insofar as it is generated or provoked, even in respect of thought grounded in gnosis, has Nature alone to thank for, although in Vedānta's sense thought as grounded in gnosis is also a dialectical dissociation from Nature. Hence the *Gītā* leads us to the understanding of Nature's own fundamental behaviour.

The dimension of understanding of the discrete behaviour of the guṇas of Nature

The understanding of the way the *guṇas* (strands) of Nature behave is what essentially constitutes the understanding of Nature and is an indispensable ingredient for thought's achieving self-knowledge, to the end that it establishes itself in accordance with gnosis' own behaviour. This understanding is the next dimension to which we are led, and it occupies chapter 14. Its importance is announced in the very first verse, which characterizes it as the "highest knowledge" (*jñānānām jñānām uttamam*). But such characterization must not be taken literally, and certainly will not be so taken by those who know the Sanskrit style, which is often given to using hyperbolic adjectives in order to stress a point. The reason for doing that here, as Śankara aptly tells us, is not because this knowledge is actually the highest, but "merely in order to rouse interest in the mind of the hearer by praising it" (*parottamaśabdābhyām stauti śrotir-budhi-ruci-utpādanārtham*). To rouse interest in something by extolling it is a well-known convention in the Mīmāṁsā literature. The *guṇa* theory of Nature leads one from metaphysics to a metaphysical psychology, and it comes from hoary antiquity, from the mythical figure Kapila himself, but clearly like many another theory it was already in the air. As Śankara states in the context of a later passage (18.19): "Even Kapila's science of *guṇas* is indeed an authority as far as the *guṇas* and their experience are concerned."[28]

The three *guṇas* are preliminarily described in stanzas 5-18 in the standard manner. Of the three, *sattva* is defined as light and hence skin to gnosis, *rajas* as passion (or energy) and *tamas* as darkness (opposite of *sattva*) or as inertia (opposite of *rajas*). Although they are alike in that "they bind the indestructible soul down in the body", (*nibadhnanti dehe dehinam avyayam*, stanza 5), *sattva* "gives rise to gnosis", (*sattvāt saṁjāyate jñānam*, stanza

17) and "those who stand thereon go upwards" (*ūrdhvaṁ gacchanti sattvasthā*, stanza 18). It only shows that *sattva*, while being part of bondage-creating *Prakṛti* is still a kind of vicegerent for the Spirit in our earthly life. Nevertheless, the higher value of *sattva* is only relative insofar as instrumentally it is superior, and it is restricted to the realm of becoming. It is the essence of discriminate wisdom for one to be able to see no other agency working in the realm of becoming than the *guṇas* (stanza 19), and so seeing one passes beyond the *guṇas* (*guṇān atīto bhavati*, Stanza 21).

The dimension of discrimination in the very realm of the Spirit

We are led to the next dimension, that of the Supreme Spirit (*puruṣottama*), in chapter 15. It is contrasted with the cosmos of becoming. It begins with the celebrated description of the upside-down tree called *aśvattha* and the exhortation to cut it down. The tree is a symbol of the cosmos. The very first verse tells us that its roots are above (*ūrdhvamūlam*) and branches below (*adhaḥśākham*), that its leaves are the Vedas (*chandāṁsi yasya parṇāni*). "He who knows it is a knower of the Veda" (*yas taṁ veda sa vedavit*). Cutting down of the tree is the act which completes the two progressive steps of discrimination between the field and the field-knower.[29]

However, the mandate of discrimination continues even further. For even in the realm of the Spirit there is need for clearly distinguishing between two ways of approaching it:

> Two-fold is the Spirit in this world, the perishable and the imperishable. The perishable is all these beings (i.e., in their totality), and it is said that that which is the unchanging is the imperishable.
>
> (*dvāv imau puruṣau loke kṣaras cā'kṣara eva ca; kṣaraḥ sarvāṇi bhūtāni kuṭastho'kṣara ucyate.*), *Gītā*, 15.16.

Discrimination goes even further. The highest level reached so far is that of the "unchanging, imperishable Spirit" (*kūṭastha akṣara puruṣa*) which is really none other than the highest point that can be reached by pursuing the metaphysics of the First Principle, as has already been outlined (before the framework of discrimination was put into operation, beginning with chapter 13, in terms of imperishable *Brahman*.)

The call now (stanza 17) is to go even beyond that highest point, in fact, to overcome and exceed metaphysics as such. So the

Gītā introduces "that which is called the *Ātman* that is [still] beyond" (*paramātme'ty udāhṛtaḥ*), "the Spirit that is the highest but other [to the former two]" (*uttama puruṣas tu anyaḥ*). The truth is even more clearly stated in stanza 18:

> **Wherefore I exceed the perishable "Spirit" and am higher than even the imperishable "Spirit"; therefore in the world and in the Veda I am celebrated as the highest Spirit.**
>
> (*yasmāt kṣaram atīto'ham akṣarād api co'ttamaḥ; ato'smi loke vede ca prathitaḥ puruṣottamaḥ.*)

The teaching pertaining to what has been spoken of here, i.e., the *Ātman*, is described in stanza 20 as "this the most hidden teaching", (*guhyatamam śāstram idam*). Commenting on this, Śankara observes, "the whole teaching of the *Gītā*, not only of the *Gītā* but of all the Vedas, is summed up in this chapter".[30] The reason for Śankara's making this emphatic and categorical statement is simply that finally *Ātman* has now been spoken, detached even from the metaphysics so inalienable from thought, because it is bound if not to the cosmos as such, at least to its ground in the imperishable *Brahman*. Even in this respect freedom has been achieved by thought as a genuine prospect, although only as a prospect.

The dimension of understanding in respect of a fundamental moral distinction

Discriminate knowledge continues to be applied as the essence of the phase of understanding that the text has been occupied with from the 14th chapter onwards. However, here in the 16th chapter a new dimension is being introduced: that of a fundamental, moral distinction in human nature, as between what is known as godly (*daivī*) and what is known as demoniac (*āsurī/rākṣasī*). This is an elemental distinction that goes far back to the past, much older than the Śāṁkhyan notion of the three *guṇas, sattva, rajas* and *tamas*, which are, no doubt, ethically as well as metaphysically conceived.

The unique aspect of what the *Gītā* is trying to do in this chapter is that, on the one hand, it draws from the primeval, elemental distinction (almost ethical dualism) in the Indian (perhaps universal) religious tradition and, on the other, tries to accommodate this very thing within a framework of the three-fold distinction of the Sāṁkhyan *guṇas*. The chapter not only discusses the two

different moral natures of human beings in great detail but actually states that there are [only] these two, in the 6th stanza. "There are two created orders of beings in this world, the divine and the demoniac", (*dvau bhūtasargau loke'smin daiva āsura eva ca*). Śankara in his commentary makes it clear that what is meant by two is "two in number" (*dvau dvisaṁkhyākau*) and that the "two orders of created beings are the two orders of created *human* beings", (*bhūtānām manuṣyāṇām sargau sṛṣṭi*). This moral polarity is drawn specifically from ancient Brāhmaṇa literature, and the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (1.3.1) clearly echoes it when it declares: "there are two classes of Prajāpati's creatures, the gods, and the demons", (*dvayā hi prājapatyā devāśca asurāśca*). [This distinction between the "godly" (*daivī*) and the "demoniac" (*rākṣasī/āsurī*) was made in an earlier place in the *Gītā* too, i.e., 9.12 and 13, but in the sense of religious rather than moral dispositions.] This dualism, although only potential, runs deep as Śankara bears witness, saying (*à propos* 16.6), "all must be divided into these two types", (*sarveṣām dvividhy-upapatteḥ*).

Of the two types, the godly (*daivī*) is one and the demoniac is the other, for which both terms *āsurī* and *rākṣasī* are synonymously employed. Because there are the three words (*daivī, āsurī*, and *rakṣasī*) Śankara at the beginning of his comment on chapter 16 speaks of (human) "natures" (*prakṛtaya*) in the plural (rather than dual). This may be interpreted merely as stylistic insofar as there are three words used in the *Gītā*, and nothing more may be made of it. The *Gītā's* own accommodation of this primeval, moral distinction of human natures in the framework of the *guṇa* theory has the eventual result of transposing the latter into the substance of the former. On the contrary, it would have been devastating to permit the cool, enumerative Sāṁkhyan metaphysics of Nature to absorb something so unassimilable, so obstinate, so elemental as the moral distinction in *human* nature expressed by the words 'godly' and 'demoniac' and all that it entails. [A non-Sāṁkhyan, non-technical connotation for "nature" (*prakṛti*) is maintained by both the *Gītā* and the commentator, along with the Sāṁkhyan, technical one. Such a freedom has never been sacrificed. But the three-*guṇa* analysis of Nature for the Sāṁkhya system is assimilated into the dualism of the godly and demoniac *human* natures clearly in a non-logistic way as evidenced better in the next chapter (chapter 17).] Accordingly, "godly" is equated with *sāttvic* as Śankara shows it to be the case (*daivī=sāttvikī*),[31] and that strictly

for the sake of the resolute observance of gnosis (*jñāna-yoga*), which is the ultimate objective that all understanding is aimed to serve. And the demoniac is simply opposed to the *sāttvic* in reference to the project that is the main concern and includes both the *rājasic* and *tāmasic guṇas*. This is the way an accommodation is worked out, and accommodation here is assimilation.

The fundamental, two-fold moral distinction is the valid perspective for dealing with the three *guṇas* as just *sāttvic* versus *non-sāttvic*. The *sāttvic* is the godly. However, the list of qualities, both godly and demoniac are simply what are universally so regarded within the Indian and in much of the world's, tradition. There is no need for revelation or for a special use of gnosis to know what the godly, moral virtues are. Their practice itself is their revelation, and yet is an indispensable condition for the realization of gnosis. Ethics is the realm of pure practice based on its own *a priori*. For the *Gītā* it is as simple as that. Further, the *Gītā* perceives what is universally perceived, namely that they come as a whole group, in indivisible association with one another by means of an associative law of their own. The group thus consists of (Stanzas 1-3) fearlessness, purity of heart, steadfastness, giving, non-violence (which according to Śankara includes compassion for those who are suffering, *kṛpā bhūteṣu duḥkhiteṣu,*[32] truthfulness, uprightness, fortitude, humility, etc. The demoniac qualities (stanza 4), which are ostentation, arrogance, conceit, insolence, ignorance, etc., are the very opposite of the godly.

Furthermore, non-belief in a God who rules the world is identified with the demoniac attitude, while belief in God is the basis of morality, i.e., the godly attitude. The position is implied in the criticism of the demoniac world-view (stanza 8), according to which the world is devoid of truth (*asatyam*), without foundation (*apratiṣṭham*) and without a God (*anīśvaram*) and the product of sexual desire (*kāmahaitukam*).

The dimension of religious reverence

The discussion of moral distinction, which has occupied the foregoing dimension, ends with the need for belief in God as the ground of morality. That naturally takes us to the next dimension, which has to do with religious reverence, or *śraddhā*.

The word which we translate as "religious reverence" (also "attentive reverence") is *śraddhā*, the key word of the 17th chapter. It has a history coming down from the *Ṛg Veda* itself. In the

Ṛg Veda and other Vedas and in the Brāhmaṇas the word occurs many times. It is a compound of two words, *śrat*, or *śrad*, and *dhā*. The word *śrat*, or *śrad*, is related to Greek *καρδία*, *καρδίη*, the English 'heart' and probably the Latin *cred* (from which credo), carrying a meaning possibly akin to what we understand by 'heart' today. The word *dhā* has a variety of meanings in the Vedas, such as "to assume", "to have", "to give", and so on.

The *Gītā* in its description of *śraddhā* puts it in the company of *yajña* and *tapas*, all of which seem to stand together, yet signifying severally, man's whole-hearted attention, sacrifical dedication and unbounded exertion, for the sake of stretching and lifting his existence beyond the given limits. Hence in the 17th chapter *śraddhā, yajña* and *tapas* (i.e., whole-hearted attention, sacrificial dedication and unbounded exertion) are each shown to be of three types, according to the *guṇas*. However, only those who are of *sattva* are deemed truly religious and capable of reverence in the true sense.

> Men of *sattva* worship the gods; men of *rajas* worship supernatural apparitions and demons; and the others, the men of *tamas*, worship ghosts and bands of spirits.
>
> (*yajante sāttvikā devān yakṣarakṣasāṁsi rājasāḥ pretān bhūtagaṇaṁś cā'nye yajante tāmasā janāḥ.*), *Gītā*, 17.4.

Not only *śraddha, yajña* and *tapas* but even the foods eaten by people are classified according to the three *guṇas* to the point that the classification begins to look even artifical and trivial. But it has to be made for the sake of completing the structure of the threefold analysis with perfect symmetry. It would seem also that the pattern followed must be carried out to the end in keeping with the general religious tradition. However, the application of the three *guṇa* scheme seems merely to serve as foil for the essential and radical distinction between the godly (= *sāttvic*) and the demoniac, for the former alone qualifies as being fitted for true religious reverence, so indispensable a condition for the realization of gnosis.

THE CONCLUSION

Now that the horizon has been comprehensively delineated what remains is to bring the teaching to a conclusion. The teaching concerns gnosis and *karma* and the two *niṣṭhās* pertaining to them, and the horizon was developed through expanding the teaching.

The conclusion is stated in Chapter 18. It is a restatement of the teaching itself, including a summary review of the *guṇa*-theory and its applicability to the *karma* part of the teaching. While *karma-niṣṭhā*, as clearing the way for, and as auxiliary to *jñāna-niṣṭthā*, is discussed exhaustively and with approval, the grounds for any independent *karma*-philosophy are rejected.

The 18th chapter re-capitulates the entire teaching, according to which *jñāna-niṣṭhā* is the ideal of philosophical thought and existence, and in the spirit of that *karma-niṣṭhā* is being recovered as a genuine expression and auxiliary means, while the alternative view, of the latter being itself an independent "path"is rejected. Only *jñāna-niṣṭhā* is self-fulfilling because its object, gnosis, is eternally self-fulfilled, while *karma-niṣṭhā* fulfills itself in being redeemed and transformed by the former. What is *magna carta* for gnosis is for *karma* its commission and pathway to transform itself into the likeness of gnosis.

In order to see how this is so, it is necessary to pursue the general meaning as well as the particular use of the word *niṣṭhā* itself, which we have translated "resolute observance". In respect of general meaning, it may be said that it is a word that reflects the character of its object, that is to say, what is resolutely observed. Accordingly, *jñāna-niṣṭhā* reflects gnosis and its properties, and *karma-niṣṭhā* reflects *karma* and its properties. The general meaning of the word does not tell the whole story as far as the *Gītā* is concerned. Śankara shows that the word has a special usage in the text which makes it paradigmatically applicable to gnosis. In fact, he argues that the word is the same as *bhakti* (devotion) in respect of the special usage applicable to gnosis. [This in the context of 18:55, which says "by *bhakti* he knows me", *bhaktyā māmabhijānāti*), etc.]. He writes:

> In so far as the word *niṣṭhā* delivers the meaning of the self-arising and ripening of gnosis devoid of an opposition, and culminating in one's own definite experience of unity with the supreme *Ātman*, generated by the

> instruction of the scripture and the teacher, and by the auxiliary aid of the purity of intelligence, absence of egotism, etc., and accompanied by the renunciation of all works predicated on the notions of doer and deed, that is, [to repeat] in view of this culmination in definite self-experience, it (i.e., the word *niṣṭhā*) is spoken of as supreme *jñāna-niṣṭhā.*[33]

And Śankara adds that *jñāna-niṣṭhā* is the same as the highest of the five kinds of *bhaktis*, described in 7:16., that is, those of the virtuous men (*sukṛtina*), of the person in distress (*ārta*), of the seeker of knowledge (*jijñāsu*), of the seeker of riches (*arthārthī*) and of the one who is already in gnosis (*jñānī*) respectively.

Accordingly then, there is only one authentic *niṣṭhā*, which is *jñāna-niṣṭhā*, because resolute observance requires something not of man, something ontologically unchanging, unbecoming and undecaying as its object. This is the object which extends itself as its own resolute observance. And expressing the same in terms of thought, we may say that resolute observance of gnosis is thought as it authentically is insofar as thought is extension of gnosis.

However, to go back again to *karma-niṣṭhā*, it is not something to be viewed as in opposition to *jñāna-niṣṭhā*, because as Śankara says, the latter has no "opposition" (*pratipakṣa*). The authenticity of *karma-niṣṭhā* consists in its being assimilated into, and transformed by, *jñāna-niṣṭhā*, while it is inauthentic if in any sense it is viewed as an independent basis for philosophy, either co-ordinate with, or superior to, the latter. An independent *karma*-philosophy is the result of agnosis (*avidyā*), as Śankara argues in the context of his comment on the climactic utterance (*caramaśloka*) of the entire *Gītā* (i.e. 18.66):

> Abandoning all *dharmas*, take refuge in me alone; I will liberate thee from all sins; do not grieve.
>
> (*sarvadharmān parityajya mām ekaṁ śaranaṁ vraja; ahaṁ tvā sarvapāpebhyo mokṣayiṣyāmi mā śucaḥ.*)

Gnosis philosophy, understood in the above manner has vast consequences for our understanding of philosophical thought. We said just a few spaces above that the resolute observance of gnosis is thought as it authentically is insofar as it is the extension of gnosis. No doubt, if this be true a profound revolution in our comprehension of that activity, namely mental activity (*mānasa kriyā*), which has to do with thought, is called for. The highest "agent" of

thought is the intellect (*buddhi*), and so much so thought is intellectual "activity". But under gnosis this activity as such is transformed into a receptivity in that the agent itself is transmuted into the similitude of that of which gnosis is the disposition. As Śankara puts it, "the intellect [as the agent in the activity of thought] in its purity puts on the sheer likeness of the *Ātman* (Ultimate Reality) in its disposition [to us] as gnosis (*caitanya*, or *jñāna*)".[34] [It must be added, that this putting on of the similitude of what is above each entity is carried on all the way down to the level of the body: the synthesizing mind then puts on the likeness of the intellect, the sense-organs that of the mind and the body that of the sense-organs.]

Having now discussed the essential gnosis-philosophy of the *Bhagavadgītā*, we have to return briefly to speak about the matter which we have characterized, based primarily on the authority of the great commentator, as part of the teaching, namely Kṛṣṇa's exhortation to Arjuna to fight the war as befits his warrior nobleman's *dharma*. In these urgings *Kṛṣṇa* is not acting as the teacher and personification of gnosis but as one through whom Arjuna's unexpressed quest finds expression. Kṛṣṇa, who in this respect is merely playing the role of companion is giving tongue to Arjuna's own inner, *dharma*-constituted phenomenal self, which is seeking itself. He has to gain it first in order to lose it by rising to gnosis. Find it and lose it he must in order to find *Ātman*. So the saying, "he that loses his soul shall find it", must be accompanied by another truth to be stated thus: "he who is in peril of losing his *dharma*-constituted self through *confusion of mind as to dharma* (*dharma-sammūḍha-cetaḥ*) must find it first so that he may lose it in gnosis and find the Self (*Ātman*)."

CHAPTER IV

GNOSIS AND PHILOSOPHICAL THOUGHT IN THE BRAHMA SŪTRA

The Brahma Sūtra (*Vedānta Sūtra*, or *Śārīraka Sūtra*), attributed to Bādarāyaṇa, is a different kind of text from the ones with which we have already tried to hold converse. It lays no claim, like the Upaniṣads or even like the *Bhagavadgītā*, to be a text through which *Vāk* speaks directly. In respect of gnosis it simply goes back to the Upaniṣads, which according to it is where *Vāk* speaks, and strings together (hence *sūtra*, meaning string, or thread),[1] in a systematic and logically ordered fashion, certain passages from them. It follows a central thread of connections so that we can call the result the bare outline of a system. A system must have a development, and in the case of the *Brahma Sūtra* the development obeys both the inner logical progression discernible as being inherent to the theme of *Brahman* itself and the outer logic of a philosophical discourse, which is the same as Reason in its public form.

However, the skeletal text of the *Sūtra* is a series of what reads like codes, which would make no sense at all to those who attempt to read it independently, that is to say without the benefit of the light thrown by "commentaries". It is quite clear that it came into existence for use within groups where Vedānta in its wider setting was studied and discussed.

Śankara's *Bhāṣya* ("Commentary") is not only the oldest of the existing ones but the authentic and original expansion of the *Sūtra* into a full-fledged system. There have been commentaries by later *ācaryas* like Rāmānuja, Madhva and others, who either modified Śankara's interpretation or offered a totally different one. Śankara's position, as is well-known, is characterized by the absoluteness of gnosis over against *karma*, with its various implications, serving as the so-called path to *mokṣa*, as well as by the transcendence of *Brahman* elevated above all qualities, or *guṇas*, not to speak of his rigorously non-dualist (*advaita*) view of Reality such that he denied being to anything other than *Brahman*. Śankara's

standpoint thus outlined has also its corollaries in his doctrines of *Avidyā* and *Māyā*. Just as a whole mighty line of Śankara's successors developed enormous logico-metaphysical arguments to defend his philosophy in its entirety, others, both the Vedāntists of different persuasions and opponents of Vedānta alike, in the several centuries that followed produced countless works, some of them very great measured by the yardstick of logical skill and acumen, with the purpose of refuting it.

Within the Vedānta tradition itself, in view of the fact that all thought actually turned around the system that Śankara had built, some centuries after his death there arose a concern with the authenticity and veracity of his interpretation of the *Sūtra* (as also of the other foundation texts of the tradition). Thus other commentaries came into being, which refuted his interpretation. However, the question as to which *Sūtra* commentary is faithful to the text is meaningless because the text in itself is not independently interpretable. So the different commentaries must actually themselves be taken as just the core texts of different philosophico-theological systems, written in imitation of Śankara's own example. There can be not much debate about the fact that without Śankara's *Bhāṣya* there would have been no possibility of his challengers writing their own commentaries on the *Sūtra*. Śankara's Commentary belongs with the *Sūtra*, making the latter come to life. Paul Deussen quite correctly observes: "We must ... renounce the attempt to keep Bādarāyaṇa's teaching and Śankara's interpretation of it separate from each other."[2] Accordingly, he looks upon the two texts together as an indivisible whole for his "systematic exposition".[3] In fact one can even go further, and describe Śankara's *Bhāṣya* as the real philosophical work which used the *Sūtra* as a path-finder like a mariner's compass. [Henceforth we shall speak of them as one single text.]

THE ARRANGEMENT OF THE TEXT

We spoke earlier of the development of the system which heeds both to the progression of the inner logic of the theme of *Brahman* and to the outer logic of discourse. Between these two there is a deeply conspired co-ordination which can be unravelled in the

arrangement of the text itself, quite clearly an evidence of its systematic character. There is, however, also something not within the purview of a system which is also witnessed in the text, and that we must describe as the accord worked out between the way gnosis (*Brahma-vidyā*) itself behaves and the way thought conducts itself. Thus we see that there is system here but also something deeper than system.

The text is composed of four *adhyāyas* or chapters, each of which is divided into four *pādas*. Each of these *pādas* is, again, divided into *adhikaraṇas* or topical sections, in which are grouped together a number of individual *sūtras*. The first *adhyāya*, i.e., *samanvaya*, text-arrangement, seeks to bring together passages from the Upaniṣads gleaned from different places which set forth the theme of *Brahman* (*Ātman*) from various perspectives. The second, called *avirodha*, meaning removal of objections based on presumed contradictions in the way the central theme has been set forth, seeks precisely to do what the word says. It is in the cooperation between *samanvaya* and *avirodha* that the fundamentals of the accord between the way gnosis itself behaves and the way thought conducts itself consists, and this accord is the basis of all *praxis*, a matter taken up next. The third chapter, *sādhana* or *praxis* is an exhaustive enterprise of refining the ritual, moral and meditative techniques aimed at realizing *Brahman*-gnosis. Indeed these techniques were already there and had been employed in the service of other goals. The fourth, *phala*, or fruit, is actually a continuation and conclusion of *praxis*. It schematizes the types of actualized goals, no doubt in religious terms continued to be called *mokṣa*, or *nirvāṇa*, but equally to be appropriated philosophically, through the thought which is the extension of gnosis. It is correct also to say that the possibility of philosophical thought is kept as a trust in the concrete religious life, and no doubt the obverse is also true, that is to say, the religious life must be held in the safe-keeping of philosophical thought.

Let us again remind ourselves that all that we say about the text is with respect to the whole text, i.e., as expanded into the *Bhāṣya* by Śankara. Both the system and, even more significantly, the accord between gnosis and thought are manifest only in the *Bhāṣya*, which also provides us with an initial access route to gnosis, as, decidedly, we cannot reach it from nowhere but only from where we are. And yet in constructing the access route it is not forgotten that thought moves towards (and reaches) gnosis

only because that thought which has the capacity to do so is gnosis extended.

The extension of gnosis as thought is the greatest mystery of all in Vedānta as philosophy. The mystery is, by nature, never to be resolved, because its continuance is what makes the entire project of the quest of Vedānta as philosophy possible. As such, on the one hand it comes to our view as the hidden reason why gnosis extends itself as thought rather than remain unextended and, on the other, confronts us with the fact of the obscuration of gnosis. However, when we are really held by it, as by the question of Ultimate Reality itself, individual boundaries, and even those between so-called subject and so-called object become meaningless. That is why the two words in Vedānta which are used to express this mystery, i.e., *māyā* and *avidyā* defy such boundaries, and is why these words are as much epistemological as metaphysical (specifically cosmological). However, the difference between *māyā* and *avidyā* appears to be non-existent for the most part except in a very subtle respect: *māyā* rather expresses the mystery with reference to the transcendent, namely as power (*śakti*) of the Divine, while *avidyā* expresses the same in terms of the structure of consciousness, especially in its struggle to know Ultimate Reality. [And later, cosmologically they are also treated as synonyms.]

Therefore, in the initial access route to the philosophy of gnosis which Śankara constructs in the *Bhāṣya* (by way of a preface) he points to *avidyā* and opens it up for everyone's profound consideration insofar as that is what confronts everyone the moment interest in Ultimate Reality is awakened. The word *avidyā* is itself very significant as in its formation it is privative, thus having the import of absence of knowledge (any knowledge) and therefore equivalent to 'ignorance' and synonymous with other terms in Sanskrit such as *ajñāna* and *apramā*. And yet it is already loaded from the start as that which signifies the structure of consciousness in which knowledge (gnosis) of Ultimate Reality is absent, a condition, however, that spurs the quest for that which is absent. [Here we must translate *avidyā* as 'agnosis'.] In this manner it is shown to be already the venue of a primordial dialectic, a setting of the stage for the entry of gnosis.

The confrontation of every man with *avidyā* in his consciousness is shown to be primordial. The first step in philosophical thought, therefore, is to completely explore the nature of this con-

frontation directly, that is to say, intuitively. However, such exploration can turn out to be perilous unless it is, for the sake of its own fruitfulness, oriented prospectively towards the discovery of man's own essential being as *Ātman* (*Brahman*). Only in that prospect can the darkness of agnosis be overcome. And therein lies the only hope of recovering meaning in the form of liberation (*mokṣa*), nonetheless a liberation through that which is essential for man, namely thought.

THE CIRCLE OF GNOSIS PHILOSOPHY

The deeply conspired co-ordination between the inner logic of the *Brahman* theme and the outer logic of discourse, and the still deeper accord between gnosis and thought are worked out through the drawing as it were of a circle of gnosis philosophy. The point from which the circle is drawn is where gnosis is revealed through the speaking of *Vāk* and the point at which the drawing of the circle is completed is where that revelation is confirmed in realization. What compels the drawing of the circle is the imperative of the task which thought that has its ground in consciousness sets for itself, namely, the discovery of Ultimate Reality. However, in drawing the circle, as far as thought is concerned, it has at its disposal only the *modes* of gnosis which it appropriates. They are also what underlie the possibility of the circle, whereby the conduct of thought accords with the behaviour of gnosis.

Now, the modes of gnosis are two, the revelatory and the realizational, or put very simply, that which belongs with the showing and that which belongs with the seeing. The genius of Vedānta, particularly as worked out explicitly by Śankara in the *Sūtra Bhāṣya*, is that it establishes the fact that showing and seeing are ultimately one and the same but with the qualification that their convergence is achieved by thought via the project of the gnosis circle. The circle may be drawn as narrowly or as widely as is required in a given project – and it will be very wide if the project is co-terminus with the cosmos (the All) itself. Reason (basically called by such names as *tarka, yukti, nyāya*, etc.) actually is on the side of showing. The traditional limbs of the Indian Science of reasoning (*tarka-śāstra*), called the *pramāṇas*, must, accordingly, be

placed on the side of showing. The *pramāṇas* (sources of knowledge or means of producing knowledge) in their customary phenomenological ordering begin with *pratyakṣa*, a word which is often wrongly translated 'perception'. But *pratyakṣa* (*prati* + *akṣa* literally, that which is before the eye) means 'appearance' (this word taken in its neutral connotation, that is, not set in the Appearance-Reality framework), signifying the coming before the eye of the thing itself. It is a showing which, no doubt, instantaneously becomes one with the event of perception, but is not perception *per se*. [The acid test which proves it is the fact that if *pratyakṣa* is used it is always for the thing which appears and not the perceiver.] Of the original three limbs of the *pramāṇa-śāstra*, after *pratyakṣa* comes *anumāna*, usually translated 'inference', and then comes *śabda* (what *Vāk* speaks), also called, more concretely, *śruti*, i.e., that of *Vāk's* speaking which has been "heard" and preserved as the Vedas. As for *anumāna*, it is the fundamental limb in the process of argumentation designed to show, not, however, some structural logical relation but always the actual things which are directly aimed at. [This is a unique feature of all Indian logic.] It is just as true of *pratyakṣa* as of *anumāna* that it is the thing that shows itself and it is not the thinker who shows anything. Likewise again, *śabda*, meaning sound and hence word, is that by which someone's appearance or presence is announced or otherwise made known. Therefore, basically, it is a form of *pratyakṣa*, which is the reason why in traditional Vedānta works beginning with those of Bādarāyaṇa and Śankara frequent references to *pratyakṣa* are made in the sense of *śabda*.[4] And of course through *śabda* it is *Brahman's* appearance, or presence, that is made known rather than just things as in *pratyakṣa* in general. In this sense *śabda* is the highest and, for that reason, the most philosophically problematic as well as productive kind of appearance, because that which appears this way, i.e., knowledge of the Ultimate Reality, is the focus of all questions in philosophy. [It is also significant that the last of the limbs added by some Mīmāṁsā and Vedānta works is *anupalabdhi*, meaning non-presence and hence the exact opposite of *pratyakṣa*, eventually equated, perhaps not correctly, with *abhāva*, i.e., the non-existent thing. And this *anupalabdhi* too was drafted as a source of knowledge, with perfect justification, no doubt.] All this being so, it would also have been clear by now that in Vedānta inasmuch as *śabda* itself is a limb of *pramāṇa-śāstra*, or *tarka-śāstra*, and inasmuch as all these limbs are also

means for the thing (even *Brahman*) to appear there is no room for conflict between Revelation and Reason.

To reiterate, the modes of gnosis, i.e., revelational and realizational, which belong respectively with showing and seeing, are as much the essence of the way gnosis itself behaves as of the way thought conducts itself. But this can be said only in the light of the accord between the way of the one and the way of the other having a philosophical reality, that is, in other words, in the light of thought's finding itself as extension of gnosis. Thought is extension of gnosis as much in the latter's revelational mode as in its realizational mode. The drawing of the circle of gnosis is merely an expression of the fact that thought is already the extension of gnosis in both of the latter's modes, and is not by any means the act by which thought *becomes* the extension.

Now, this accord tells us, as in the case of gnosis so in the case of thought, that there is a showing (revelational) mode and a seeing (realizational) mode, although always it must be borne in mind that what essentially underlies both of them is one and the same and that they are different only as modes. Thus, just as through the use of the *pramāṇas* the showing is carried forward by thought, so there is something else by which the seeing is carried forward *in* thought, and the idea is expressed by a number of terms such as *dhyāna, nididhyāsana, upāsana*, etc., all of which have the generic meaning of 'meditation'. This meditation or meditative thought occupies the centre of what is called *sādhana*, or *praxis*, and it is thought conducting itself as though it were a means to realization. As we enter the text of the *Sūtra* and its *Bhāṣya* we shall see how these two modes of thought correspond to the modes of gnosis, and how both are integral to the gnosis circle. We will also notice that the circle is drawn in a perfectly coherent and systematic manner in this text, which for that reason alone has become "the standard work of the Vedanta school",[5] and we should add, its standard-bearer, that is, the one by which all other works are to be judged.

ACCESS ROUTE TO THE GNOSIS-CIRCLE: ŚANKARA'S CELEBRATED PREFACE

By his brief but extraordinarily powerful preface, Śankara lays an access route to the philosophy of Vedānta, aimed at every thinking person as an invitation to enter the gnosis circle which he is about to draw. It consists in a radical examination of the ground of consciousness from which naturally all thought that has to do with the question of Ultimate Reality is launched. It is in fact a critique of the ground of consciousness. The critique is made possible by the anticipation of gnosis, which like the early morning sun puts under its beam of light a fundamental element in consciousness which is operational in thought's quest for Ultimate Reality. That element is shown to be the innate and primordial power of consciousness to distinguish between the subject and the object. Therefore, it is the basic tool of all thinking. Hence, Śankara writes:

> The object of awareness (*viṣaya*) and the subject that is aware (*viṣayin*), denoted by the words *yuṣmat* [the basal form of the pronoun meaning 'you'] and *asmat* [the basal form of the pronoun meaning 'I'] respectively, which in nature are as different as light and darkness, cannot transform themselves into each other, and neither can their respective properties (*dharmas*) be mutually exchanged. Therefore, the superimposition (*adhyāsa*) of the objects which are within the range of the denotation of the word *yuṣmat* and its properties upon the subject which is within the range of the denotation of *asmat* and in essence is consciousness must be deemed a [dynamic] fiction (*mithyā*). Likewise also is the superimposition of the properties of the one upon the properties of the other. Nevertheless, it is a natural course in the world's transaction, resulting from "the fiction which is agnosis" (*mithyājñāna*) that there is [such] mutual superimposing of the subject and the object along with their respective properties, although they are absolutely different from each other. And there is also this imagining 'I am this', 'this is mine' on account of the fact that "truth and non-truth have intimately paired with each other" (*satyānṛte mithunīkṛtya*).[6]

The preface points out the existence of a strange anomaly here, namely, the lack of a proper coordination between the way language functions through denotation of its most basic terms and the way consciousness actually operates in thought. This is demonstrated as a vicious condition which fundamentally inhibits our

natural ability to arrive at even empirically reliable knowledge of things and of ourselves. And how great would this limitation be if the knowledge we seek is that of Ultimate Reality, whether taken as objective or in terms of the Self (*Ātman*)! And further, because of the pairing of truth and non-truth the shifting of our intuitions as between true and false [refer, in our Introduction, to the discussion of "thought as the penetration of the hidden depths of reality"] ceases to be a real possibility.

Śankara does not believe that this condition is correctible from *within* the immanent structure of consciousness by way of some further critique or therapy. Hence he does not endorse any programme in such a direction as though that were to constitute philosophy. He understands this condition to be but part of a universal condition that embraces everything, including those things which we naively assume as being primordial and hence a priori. This universal condition is described by Śankara as the mutual "superimposition" (*adhyāsa*) of self and not-self, and is designated by the term *avidyā*. "Learned men consider this superimposition to be of the nature of *avidyā*," (*tametamevam lakṣaṇam adhyāsam panditāḥ avidyeti manyate*). It is called *avidyā*, or *agnosis*, because it is that which by positing itself as the very antithesis of *vidyā* (*jñāna*), or gnosis, confronts it and is confronted by it. Indeed, it is by virtue of this confrontation that man discovers himself as the being whose phenomenal essence is the desire for gnosis. The discovery is made possible by the grace of *Vāk*, and thereby *agnosis* itself is grasped as what is marked for dissipation. Hence Śankara concludes the Preface with these words:

> It is for the sake of destroying the cause of this vicious condition (or *anartha*, to be paraphrased as 'viciously cyclic condition') and for attaining the knowledge of the unity of the Self that all Vedānta (Upaniṣadic) statements originate. In what manner is this the purport of all Vedānta statements we will endeavour to show in this Vedāntic system.[7]

This vicious condition is not to be construed as the usual predicament of logic, what is technically called *anavasthā* (going back forever without reaching a place for repose), but a deep existential one which causes the gravest self-disorientation in our search for a foot-hold. Hence it is described precisely in that sense as *anarthahetu*. [There is a bonus to be obtained by following Śankara's analysis, which is this: Through *Vāk* a co-ordination between the

way language functions and the way consciousness operates even in everyday life may be aimed at so that the meanings of words in their denotational field can be caught correctly by means of the intuitions of consciousness. This possibility will turn out to be no small boon in every kind of communication and its benefits will be obvious and will be a tremendous aid to philosophy even when it is approached as what has its ground in consciousness (forgetting the gnosis ground for the time being) as it will save thought from all that initial effort which occupies the bulk of the enterprise known by the name of philosophy.] Now this vicious condition can be put an end to by only the gnosis circle, into which thought is ushered.

A PRELIMINARY STATEMENT BASED ON THE FIRST FOUR SŪTRAS

The first four *sūtras* (the *catussūtri* as they are customarily called) are taken as one whole, based on which a complete initial statement of Vedānta as that philosophy in which the way of thought accords with gnosis is given. It is a brief preliminary account of how gnosis behaves vis-à-vis thought's quest for Ultimate Reality and how thought may conduct itself responsively.

The very first *sūtra*: "Then, therefore the desire for *Brahman*-gnosis", (*athā'to brahma-jijñāsā*), is examined from the point of the fundamental character of man's existence to be grasped philosophically, as what is unconditionally oriented towards the liberating knowledge of Ultimate Reality. This truth, no doubt, is to be always taken in conjunction with that with which it primordially corresponds (as the foundation of all *a prioris*), namely that the essential disposition of Ultimate Reality (towards us) is gnosis. Try as hard as we may we shall never succeed in escaping the equation of this correspondence, which, however, positively viewed is, the first firm step that thought can take for releasing itself from the strangle-hold of the existential vicious condition, the *terminus ad quem* reached by thought as it tries to grasp Ultimate Reality from the ground of consciousness alone.

Over against this equation of correspondence may be placed (for the sake of an instructive contrast) an ends-and-means approach for which the paradigm is provided by none other than the

other line of Vedic exegesis, i.e., Pūrva-Mīmāṁsā, or Karma-Mīmāṁsā. This line of exegesis is known for its elevation of the potencies of *karma*, or the rite, that in effect sums up all of man's manly effort, taking it beyond its mundane frame to the region of the transcendent. The rite, on the one hand would appear to be an absurd, humanistic epic calculated to be the only way for man to grasp for himself the utterly elusive meaning of his own and the universe's existence – and indeed nothing less than the totally "absurd" epic of human rite can be adequate for this. But on the other, the absurdity of it is removed by the fact that the epic is the enactment of a transcendent knowlege which comes via *Vāk*. Śankara now faces head-on this epic heorism of the rite and says 'no' to it from the vantage point of *Brahman*-gnosis, for he sees ultimate truth as lying even beyond it, which is what he wants to show. He, however, does not object to the "absurdity" of the rite, for he too shares the view that the absurdity of the absurd is dissolved in a transcendent knowledge. The moot question for him is the nature of transcendent knowledge itself, as to whether it generates an epic of the rite or an authentic epic of gnosis, under which the rite, and with it the whole sphere of human action, would also find its proper place.

At this point we must recall how the *Bhagavadgītā* (according to Śankara at least) rejects the resolute observance of action and affirms the resolute observance of gnosis. It is the opportune moment now to link action (*karma*) discussed in that text with the principal philosophy of Karma-Mīmāṁsā. Need it be said that in either context *karma* is not spoken of primarily in the everyday sense of action, but in the sense of the epic of the rite, the way to grasp the transcendent, elusive meaning of all existence and hence as the action which embraces, supercedes and also sanctifies all human action.

[At this point we cannot but recall how the *Bhagavadgītā* rejects the resolute observance of action and affirms the resolute observance of gnosis. The action that is rejected is the same as the *karma* laid down by the Pūrva-Mīmāṁsā.]

According to Pūrva-Mīmāṁsā, the knowledge that it gives has placed ultimate, efficient, salutary action (the rite) within man's power. The rite is, no doubt, an acknowledgement of the transcendent and it is also the means by which man can project himself unerringly to his final destiny. Śankara in rejecting *karma* rejects all the assumptions that underlie it.

It is the common understanding of all the systems of Indian philosophy that our review of Ultimate Reality reflects – and is reflected by – the means (called means of liberation, or *mokṣa-sādhanam*) that are envisaged to reach it, that the two agree with each other. And it is also a truism that there is no view of Ultimate Reality as pure intellectual vision, divorced from a means that assuredly takes us to it. The question, however, is not only what the means are but *how* we take even that which is known to be the true means. According to Vedānta, that alone is true "means" which is no longer measured by the criteria of means. This is the crux of its debate with Pūrva-Mīmāṁsā and is the essential reason for its rejection of the means-ends structure as such. Vedānta, therefore, takes the position, that in its case the view of Ultimate Reality is such that the "means", i.e., gnosis, already belongs with Ultimate Reality (as its own disposition towards us), which accordingly ceases to be any kind of means in our sense. Hence Śankara writes: "Only by means of gnosis is Ultimate Reality to be reached. And the reaching of Ultimate Reality is man's highest end (*puruṣārtha*), attainable through the destruction of that vicious condition (*anartha*), namely *avidyā*, which (writ large) is the seed of the entire chain of phenomenal becoming (*saṁsāra*)." Hence gnosis is described as *pramāṇa* namely, that which gives itself as the "means of knowledge". It should be noted that it is called not *a pramāṇa* but just *pramāṇa* and hence is not to be understood in terms of the scholastically organized *pramāṇa-śāstra* where it is a stock word and used in the weak sense of the science pertaining to the "means of knowledge". On the contrary, in the present context it occurs in the uniquely strong sense that is attached to the original *pramā*, or the true knowledge of the entity that goes with gnosis (*jñāna*) itself. *Pramāṇa* in its original sense must be taken as meaning gnosis projecting itself into the realm of "means".

The epic of gnosis versus the epic of the rite

Let us briefly advert to the central issue which has been looming over the debate between the two Mīmāṁsās, i.e., Vedānta and Pūrva-Mīmāṁsā, to be put in the form of the question: which is true, the epic of gnosis, i.e., that which expresses the epic aspect of gnosis, or the epic of the rite? The two systems ostensibly have a common foundation, namely the Vedas, although they do differ as to the portions through which *Vāk* itself is held to speak (i.e., the Upaniṣads for the one, the Karma-kāṇḍa, or Brāhmaṇas, for

the other). The scope of this debate, a mortal combat in fact, cannot be confined to the two systems, nor to the history of Indian philosophy. Everyone has a stake in its outcome, for thinkers everywhere are tacit participants in it and not just spectators. For which is true, the epic of gnosis or the epic of the rite? As for the latter, need it be said that it expresses the final meaning of all philosophies which put action in the forefront of thought, whether in the form of grasping action or liberating action? It is only that Pūrva-Mīmāṁsā expresses these philosophies in the perfect universal language, that is, of the rite, working out from the very start the absolute integrity between word and meaning as stated at the very beginning of the fundamental systematic text of the system, Jaimini's *Mīmāṁsā-Sūtra*, in these words: *likavedayoḥ śabdārthaikyam* ("In the world and in the Vedas there exists unity of word and meaning"). No other similar philosophy which invests so much in action has created such a perfect language of rite as has Pūrva-Mīmāṁsā.

Śankara's 'no' to Pūrva-Mīmāṁsā must be extended to a whole lot of philosophies throughout history, particularly today. Pūrva-Mīmāṁsā presents not only an epic of the rite but a humanistic one, which, however, is so thoroughly humanistic that, far from rejecting the gods, it assigns them a place in its grand and universal scheme of action, reality and meaning – and man, not a creature subject to fear, holds the key to it in his hands because he is master of the rite.[9]

Śankara carefully works out the alternative epic, that which expresses the epic aspect of the gnosis circle. In this task he has the entire Upaniṣads, the *jñāna-kāṇḍa*, from which to draw inspiration. The Upaniṣads themselves were a gathering of the gnosis elements trapped in the sacrificial (*yajña*) material of the Vedic Mantras as well as the Brāhmaṇas. The most luminous example is found at the very beginning of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, where the most heroic[10] horse sacrifice symbolism is transposed into gnosis, commencing with the words: "AUM, verily the dawn is the head of the sacrificial horse", (*aum, uṣā vā aśvasya medhyasya śiraḥ*).

The epic of gnosis will also eventually restore the rite itself, within gnosis, to its rightful place, not as an epic (and certainly as a humanistic one), and with it the entire sphere of action, including most of all the active form of thought, so that we may "do" thinking too, as we surely must. It is in this spirit that Śankara shows the way to re-claim that pinnacle of the Indian

epic literature, i.e., *Bhagavadgītā* episode of the *Mahābhārata*. His work in this respect is a clear pointer as to how the popular epics as a whole may be viewed as enactments of gnosis; wherein lies the fulfilment of *dharma.*[11]

Knowing the known as the essential movement of the gnosis circle
The epic which implements and enacts the gnosis circle is construed as a movement in the direction of knowing that which is known. This is the theme to which Śankara turns at the end of his comment on the first *sūtra*. A fundamental predicament with regard to the quest for Ultimate Reality is expressed: "It is either absolutely known or not known at all. If absolutely known then it need not be desired to be known; if not known at all it would be impossible to desire to know it", (*tatpuna brahma prasiddham aprasiddham vā syāt*; *yadi prasiddham na jijñāsitavyam*; *aprasiddham naiva śakyam jijñāsitum iti*).

This is a predicament of the most serious kind, which puts the whole enterprise of philosophy under question. For, how indeed can one investigate Ultimate Reality if it is not already self-evident, and if self-evident why investigate? Is it possible that this question is aimed at other ways of conducting thought in the quest for Ultimate Reality than in accordance with gnosis, in view of a whole chain of implications and entailments that can emanate from it? Śankara seems to let the question answer itself within the terms of gnosis. In doing so, however, he directs attention to Ultimate Reality itself, which is described as "eternally pure, eternally knowing and eternally free" (*nitya-śuddha-buddha-mukta-svabhāvam*), as well as "omniscient and wrapped in almightiness" (*sarvajñam sarvaśakti-samanvitam*). "The word *brahman* itself", Śaṇkara contends, "has the meaning of eternal purity, etc.", (*brahma-śabdasya hi vyutpadyamānasya nityaśuddhatvādayo'rtaḥ pratīyante*). Because of this it must be deduced that it is a word that is the fullness of meaning which informs our thought about Ultimate Reality.

And *Brahman* indeed exists. Its existence is made available to thought by reason of manifesting the meaning of what that word itself brings in our deepest self. Accordingly, Śankara observes, "Brahman's existence is made available (i.e., to thought) on account of its (i.e., the word's) meaning having come from the root *bṛhate* it expands into greatness) and on account of the self-hood of everyone", (*brhạter-dhātorarthānugamāt, sarvasya*

ātmatvāñca brahmāstitva prasiddhih). This is the great correspondence or attunement to be looked for as that which, according to Vedānta, makes philosophy what it is. This is the correspondence between expansion into infinite greatness (of Being) that the word *brahman* itself connotes and the indispensable reference of all meaning, in other words the self of everyone who thinks. And the word *brahman* stands conclusively for *Vāk* as it is on its way to meet our thinking self, and thinking is nothing but welcoming and receiving *Vāk* and bringing it home to the destination to which it has set its face of its own accord. [And as for *Vāk*, because of its association with the Vedas, it is likely to project the notion that only those who have the privileged position in relation to the Vedas will have access to it. But in the case of the self, no such privileged standpoint is recognized because "everyone knows selfhood and no one thinks 'I do not exist' ", (*sarvo hi ātmāstitvam pratyeti na nāham asmīti*). "Everyone" (*sarva*) is absolutely everyone, "the whole world" (*sarva loka*).]

The Upaniṣadic equation of the self and *Brahman* (*ātma ca brahma*) is restated by Śankara in this place, and it indeed acquires a new dimension of significance for philosophy, by reason of the location of the meaning of what *Vāk* itself says within the self of the thinker, which, inasmuch as it is the inescapable reference of that meaning, grasps infinite Being unto itself, as itself and not as another. However, this is not as in the natural paths of thought (as we have discussed in our Introduction) a mere boundary-making for the unbounded that is *Brahman*. On the contrary, it is removal of boundary from the self, and consequently from thought too.

No doubt, in this new dimension to which thought has been raised through bringing to the forefront the revolutionary significance of the equation of *Brahman* with the self, an unprecedented possibility has been indicated. Consequently, it speaks to all thought that raises the question of Ultimate Reality and helps it to give a coherent account of its conduct beyond its natural competence. Thus in opening the way for all thought to such a self-revelation gnosis ceases to have to remain in some splendid isolation. Therefore, the truth that the gnosis circle exemplifies paradigmatically, namely, that only the known can be desired to be known (*jñātam eva jijñāsitavyam*) can be transported, and be made integral, to all philosophy that asks the question of Ultimate Reality. In fact, the dictum that only the known can be desired to be known, that it is the real objective of all philosophical quest,

serves as the essential truth pervading the entire movement of the gnosis circle. The philosophy of the gnosis circle will serve to awaken all philosophy to this awareness.

It is, therefore, not the case that the gnosis circle runs its course without contact with other ways of engaging in philosophy. The truth, on the contrary, is that it merges with all other streams of thought and yet is working in them from within. Further, it is not the case that the gnosis circle, because it operates with a clear vision of the goal of thought, will cause open-ended questions, the essence of philosophy, to be dried up. Here again the truth is just the opposite, for the desire to know what is at its base already known is the ground of infinite questioning. And indeed there is no other ground which is able to sustain such questioning. That is the reason why the term 'infinite' is used so as to mark that ground, which is itself what is infinite in the true sense, and, consequently, the endless act of asking questions produces an invincible sense of our approaching the highest truth, or rather of its closing in upon us. [Hence also the compact of questioning with adoration.] That means that the word 'infinite' does not stand for a mere quantitative march of tiresome and endless distances. We must recall that the very arrival of that which laid the theoretical base for the gnosis circle, i.e., the truth that *Brahman* is *ātman*, in the Upaniṣads was preceded by such asking of questions – and now it is deeply revived by Śankara. It is this quality which makes philosophy the inexhaustible self-expression of the gnosis circle, for, as such it is not a movement from one definite point to another definite point but the swallowing up of every beginning and of every end that are part and parcel of other ways of thought which naturally launch us into philosophy. The gnosis circle takes over what had been launched from other grounds. Finally then, to let thought be the extension of gnosis, to let it conduct itself in accordance with the way gnosis itself behaves, to be qualitative and inexhaustible in the questionings which constitute philosophy and yet be *knowing* all the time, to take over all thought that has been launched from other grounds, that is the nature of the epic of gnosis.

The gnosis circle and the exegis of what Vāk itself has spoken in the Upaniṣads

We say that *Vāk has spoken*. Clearly, there is a retrospect which characterizes thought's involvement in the gnosis circle, because

Vāk's speaking comes to us via the Upaniṣadic sentences which are already there, and because of the historic character of our existence and of our knowledge – the past being the medium – we put its arrival in the past. The Vedāntic tradition, is, however, careful not to constrict the past as such to the chronological past, which is the reason why it is open to us in the present and is indeed present. The exegesis of the Upaniṣadic sentences, which are already there and, by defying the concrete determination of time, comes to us in the present, is itself the way our thought can conduct itself in accordance with the way gnosis itself behaves, that is to say, in the manner of *Vāk's* speaking.

The exegesis of Upaniṣadic sentences

The gnosis circle is undergirded by the exegesis of what *Vāk* has spoken in the Upaniṣads. The task envisaged thereby is that of bringing our natural thought, through criticism, into the orbit of gnosis, having taken into account the variety of ways in which men without the benefit of gnosis approach the question of Ultimate Reality and with it the question of the self. These men range all the way from the naive persons and the *lokāyatas* (materialists) who contend "that the mere body endowed with sensibility is the self" (*dehamātram caitanyaviśiṣṭam ātmeti*) to those who think "that there is a God who is omniscient and omnipotent but is different from the self" (*asti tadvyatirikta īśvara-sarvajña-sarvaśaktiriti*). Only a bare sampling is provided as possible ways in which man can think on the subject which is "indefinitely large" (*bahavo vipratipanna*). [Besides, man's final blessedness is in jeopardy here, because attainment of that goal is the deep-seated reason why man investigates Ultimate Reality at all.] In view of all this, Śankara writes at the end of his comments on the first *sūtra*, announcing the nature of the task of exegesis as follows: "Hence now begins via an essay on the desire for *Brahman*-gnosis the project of going reflectively over the sentences of the Upaniṣads, using the tool of Reason that accords with them so as to be of service in the cause of ultimate blessedness", (*tasmāt brahma-jijñāso'panyāsa-mukhena vedāntavākya-mīmāṁsā tadavirodhatarkopakaraṇa niḥśreyasa-prayojana prastūyate*). [The word *mīmāṁsā* has the meaning of going reflectively, or thoughtfully, over something said by *Vāk*.]

Because *Vāk's* speaking is at once revelation and concealment there arises the need for going reflectively over what has been said in the Upaniṣads. To this end is Reason drafted into service as a

tool (*upakaraṇa*). A tool is only as good as the use to which it is put and that depends on, on the one hand, the user and, on the other, the purpose or goal. A tool is a tool because, unlike an instrument (*yantra*), it never takes over the direction of its own use. In Vedānta, Reason is, on the one hand, a cement that secures the connections among points in the passage of thought through the gnosis circle and, on the other, the clearing house of the points themselves as they are developed in that circle. It is that which carries thought towards its destiny, which is accord with gnosis. It is not fitted to see anything other than the environs of connections which include the connection of thought with gnosis in their ultimate accord, as that too is a point to be cleared in the clearing house. And it is not fitted to see gnosis as such, much less to clear it. Nevertheless, it is called upon to critically examine the point at which thought links itself up with gnosis the latter prerogative, while never to be surrendered, is always liable to be mistaken as though it were a power able to pass verdict upon gnosis. However, it has been universally the case that Reason oversteps its boundaries and under the guise of speculation often claims to be the instrument, and sometimes the sole instrument, of discovery of Reality.

While it is true that there is in the Indian tradition no word which has either the depth or the force that Reason has in the Western tradition, there nevertheless are a number of different terms which serve as partial equivalents. [Quite the obverse is the case with *jñāna*, for which 'gnosis', though cognate philologically, is only a weak translation. Especially is it the case in Vedānta where *jñāna* has a depth and force not found in any Western term including 'gnosis'.] However, such words as there are in Sanskrit reveal both their legitimate role in which Vedānta sees Reason and its tendency, recognized even in antiquity, to overstep it. The words which Sanskrit supplies in this respect are *tarka, yukti, anumāna* and *nyāya* itself (and sometimes even *pramāṇa*, depending on the context).

To take the word *tarka* first, it comes from the root *tark*, meaning to conjecture, to guess, to suspect, to infer, to try to discover, to ascertain, to argue out (either in public debate or in one's own mind), to speculate, to recollect, to have in one's mind, to intend, etc. Some of the earliest instances of its use are in the *Kaṭha* and *Maitrī Upaniṣads*. In *Kaṭha* 1.2.9. its power is assessed negatively: "Not by *tarka* is this (i.e., knowledge of *Brahman*) attainable (*naiṣā tarkeṇa matirāpaneya*).[12] But in *Maitri* 6.18 and 20 it is

listed as a member of the six-membered Yoga (*ṣadangayoga*) which carries thought towards its destiny, meaning accord with gnosis.

This reference in the *Maitrī Upaniṣad* leads us to the word *yukti*, for it has the same root *yuj*, to unite, to fit, from which *yoga* also comes. The *Māṇḍūkya Kārikā* of Gauḍapāda (an elaboration of the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad*), at 4.25 clearly elevates *yukti* as a *darśana*, or seeing, and at 3.23 employs the commonly used compound, *yukti-yuktam* (united in *yukti*) in an uncommon sense.

Again, *anumāna*, usually rendered 'inference' comes from *anu* + *mā* (*mīyate*), meaning to measure after. In *Maitrī Upaniṣad* 6.1, we have the word used in verbal form: "The course of the inner self is measured after by the course of the outer self", (*bahir ātmakyā gatyāntarātmano anumīyate gatiḥ*); and "the course of the outer self is measured after by the course of the inner self", (*antarātmakyā gatyā bahir ātmano anumīyate gatiḥ*). The very form of the word shows that *anumāna* is not self-initiating or self-impelling Reason, for it merely measures after something that has presented itself. Although in Vedānta what it is a measuring after is gnosis which gives itself or appears by itself, it is always predicated, even in other philosophies, upon the things or events which on their own come into view, that is to say, became *pratyakṣa.*[13]

Finally, the word *nyāya*, from *ni* to lead, guide, + *aya*, has the sense of returning a thing into itself in the manner of a cyclic movement, and hence acquires the meaning of the *rational* process by which the *ārchē* of what presents itself in its appearing or *pratyakṣa* is manifested by securing the connections among points in the passage of thought through the circle. In this sense it originally meant exactly the same as *mīmāṁsā*. The *Āpastamba Dharma Sūtra*[14] has two passages where the words *nyāya* and *nyāyavit* are used simply to refer to Pūrva Mīmāmsā and not to the Nyāya system of Gotama. In Pāṇini's *Sūtra* we find the same usage.[15]

Śankara uses all these words in both their positive and negative meanings. [In fact the proper ordering of his usages of these and related words would itself be a significant task. That indeed is true of other words he uses too, not excluding *pratyakṣa, pramāṇa* and even *jñāna*.] Reason when positively understood is taken as functioning within the gnosis circle, as fitting or cementing the connections among points within it and as manifesting thought's link with the ground of gnosis itself. That is how Śankara is able to say that certain views are *nyāyyam* (what is properly *nyāya*) while certain other views are not *nyāyyam.*

CAUSE THE PRIMORDIAL QUESTION

The question of cause, which is primordial in the order of human inquiries spurred by the shock of wonder, is taken up in the second *sūtra* and the comments upon it. The *sūtra* says: "Whence the origin etc., of this," (*janmādyasya yataḥ*). Put in the form of a readable sentence it is rendered thus: "(It is that) whence (comes) the origin etc., of this (world)." Only origin is explicitly mentioned but with "et cetera" (*ādi*) it is understood to be stylistic abbreviation for origin, subsistence and destruction, (*śṛṣṭi/janma, sthiti* and *bhangam/saṁhāram*). The locus classicus of these is in the description of *Brahman* in *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* 3.1.1: "That from which these creatures are born, by which after birth they live, and which on departing they enter, that desire to know, that is *Brahman*", (*yato vāco imāni bhūtani jāyante, yena jātāni jīvante, yat prāyanti abhisaṁviśanti, tad vijijñāsasva, tad brahmeti*).

This *sūtra* speaks about the cause of the world (*jagat-kāraṇam*), in its formally expressible three-fold aspect of "whence?" "whereby?" and "wither?", with another aspect not formally expressible implicit, i.e., the question "wherefore?", or "why?" Man is a being fated to ask the question of cause, because he sees himself as an effect. What it is he and his world are effects of he knows not; nevertheless, it is impossible for him to find rest without knowing it. This is the anguish he carries with him from cradle to grave. The question of the cause of the world is primordial among those questions which result from the impingement of wonder, and is instantaneously formulated in our space-time oriented mind with which we do intellectual thinking as "whence?" "whereby?" and "whither?" The question of the cause of the world is primordial in that it is indissociable from our space-time oriented mind's earliest moments of its grasp of the world and thereby of consciousness, upon which it is grounded. It gave birth to metaphysics centering on the question "what?" [But behind all these there has always been lying, being laid by *Vāk* (*Logos*), the question "why?"]

Metaphysics is not the only expression of the causality mode of our thinking, for every branch of science is likewise an expression of it, depending upon the particularity of the phenomenon investigated. Every science, however, had been reared in a metaphysical cradle in that the particular phenomenon, whether the physical

world or the *psychē*, was examined under an intractable whole, which is the province of metaphysics.

It is possible that, as Kant says, space and time are forms which the mind imposes upon the world. However, we do not know the history of this imposition, nor the point at which it originally occurred. We must assume that the origin of this imposition is conterminous with the genesis of phenomenal human consciousness itself, although it certainly is not a determinate moment. Therefore space and time are indissociable from the human mind which is the ground upon which we even inquire into the origin of space and time, and consequently whenever we raise the cause question *à la* the origin etc. of the world the space-time orientation of the question becomes inescapable. The *Brahma Sūtra* and the *Bhāṣya* recognize this predicament, and accordingly they use the space-time orientation of the cause question and with it the same orientation of the intellect itself as a ladder by which to climb beyond it, and to force the issue thereby of the real Cause (which is Ultimate Reality itself).

Vedānta sees something still anterior lying behind even the forms of space and time as self-constitutive, but elusive to all investigations. This it calls *avidyā*, which being beginningless is what makes even the moment of the first advent of the forms of time and space indeterminate and indeterminable. Nevertheless, gnosis is its termination (*nivṛtti*). In that sense *avidyā* is also writ large as cause of the world and of our phenomenal self-hood. [Buddhism too views *avidyā* as the cause of *duḥkha* (suffering), as the first link in the causal chain of twelve links. But it has no way of speaking of another Cause in the way Vedānta is privileged to do.]

The metaphysical inquiry into the cause of the world may be undertaken as a speculative activity, which would be natural for the human mind or as led by what *Vāk* itself says about Ultimate Reality, i.e., in accordance with gnosis. In the Indian world speculations of various kinds had their own vogue, of which the most prominent products were the Sāṁkhya theory of *Prakṛti* and Vaiśeṣika theory of atoms. On the contrary, Vedānta which starts from the ground of gnosis, endeavours to tame speculation with the help of what *Vāk* itself says.

Śankara approaches the question of the cause of the world from a point beyond anything that speculation can reach, i.e., from the standpoint of what *Vāk* itself says. As such he treats this question as a phenomenally conditioned way of asking about *Brahman*. To

speak of *Brahman* as the Cause is, however, not so much an answer to a previously directed question as the revelation, *via Vāk's* speaking, of the questioning mode of *Brahman*-gnosis itself. And yet our previously directed question, which naturally and irrepressibly springs from the ground of human consciousness, far from having to be midsdirected, is led so as to enter the questioning mode of *Brahman*-gnosis. This is the essence of Vedāntic thinking on the subject of Cause. That is why Śankara remarks: "*Brahman*-gnosis brings about thinking on the meaning of what *Vāk* itself says", (*vākyārtha vicāraṇādhyavasāna-nirvṛttā hi brahmāvagatiḥ*).

In order to lead our thinking on the subject of Cause away from the speculative orientation and into the questioning mode of *Brahman*-gnosis Reason is to be regrasped and the power of connections among points in thoughts' passage to gnosis, including most of all the last point linking it with gnosis. There should be no hesitation in doing this, "because", to reproduce Śankara's own words, "the Upaniṣads themselves take the help of Reason" to this end, (*śrutyaiva ca sa sahāyatvena tarkasya abhyupaipatvāt*). This is why Śankara states further: "It is seen that a person's intelligence is helpful to him", (*puruṣa-buddhi sahāyyam ātmano darśayati*).

The affirmation of the questioning mode of Brahman-gnosis

The questioning mode of *Brahman*-gnosis has profound implications for the very speculative approach to cause. How strange that all speculation results in some metaphysics, with a conjectured First Cause passed on as the foundational reality from which the entire chain of being is the deduced! And yet this fact must not be used as an argument against the free exercise of the human intellect in search of the cause. How then is the irrespressible freedom of thought appropriated except by approaching it as gnosis' own self-extension? At the same time, the course of those who see thought, grounded as it is for them in mere knowledge of transcendental commands, as nothing more than an appendage to the rite, must also be resisted.

The possibility of a conflict between what *Vāk* itself speaks (i.e., Revelation) and Reason is abolished in Vedānta by removing the falsely speculative vocation from the latter. But this must not be so interpreted as to mean that Revelation is some kind of authority for man's moral and religious conduct, i.e., in the performance of the rite, which is the way that the other orthodox, *Vāk*-based system, i.e., Purva-Mīmāṁsā, understands it. On the

contrary, for Vedānta, which puts itself forward as the true Mīmāṁsā, Revelation is nothing but the manifestation through *Vāk* of something that is already there on its own, namely gnosis, whose destiny is realization, i.e., playing out the reality of the Real (*satyasya satyam*). Hence Śankara writes:

> It is not the case that what *Vāk* speaks may be grasped in isolation as in the case of how we should conduct ourselves in the rite, but it is the case that what *Vāk* speaks (i.e., *Brahman*-gnosis) is to be taken in conjunction with the possibility of its realization. That (i.e., the latter) is the path of approach because *Brahman*-gnosis is what must culminate in actual experience and because as an object of inquiry it is an already existing entity. When we view Revelation merely as source of the knowledge of the rite there is no reference to experience (i.e., realization) and what *Vāk* speaks is presumed to be mere (external) authority, the essence of it all coming down to action by man which, however, for its motivation must depend solely upon man (i.e., his will).[16]

At this point the *Bhāṣya* only seems to turn tangentially, by way of a digression as it were, to Pūrva Mīmāṁsā, in order to criticize it in reference to the deep implication of the inquiry into cause, for thought. And yet far from being actually a tangential detour, this criticism of Pūrva-Mīmāṁsā also points simultaneously to the impotence of a speculative system like Sāṁkhya to adequately answer the former's thesis that the real goal of philosophy ought to be the appropriation of the Force/Power by way of the understanding of the Vedic injunctions and the performance of action in accordance with it. Pūrva-Mīmāṁsā is a system which wants to break with the causal mode of our thinking. It bases itself on a radical stance that the world may better be assumed as what has always been there, or, in its own words as "what has never been not thus" (*na kadācit anīdṛśam jagat*). This no doubt reflects a heroism which is part of its approach to philosophy as the epic of the rite. A mere speculative system like Sāṁkhya which does not know the secret of interiorizing thought as experience will indeed have no answer to such a mighty challenge. Therefore, the statement, "because *Brahman*-gnosis is what culminates in actual experience and as an object of inquiry is an already existing entity", is addressed to both these opposing systems.

For Vedānta inquiry into cause is *not intrinsically part of Brahman*-gnosis even in its questioning mode. Nevertheless, it belongs with *Brahman*-gnosis insofar as it is a legitimate inquiry

which is launched from the ground of human consciousness and as such falls within the proper scope of *Vedānta-vākya-mīmāṁsā*. That is the reason why Śankara states that this *sūtra* concerning origin is not to be looked upon as though it were put forward "for the sake of producing a speculative essay (on cause)" (*janmādi-sūtram na anumānopanyāsārtham*) but "for the sake of showing forth what has been revealed by Vedāntic sentences" (*vedānta-vākya-pradarśanārtham*).

The place of the concrete myth in the inquiry into Cause

There is no room for a speculative essay on cause in Vedānta. Nevertheless, here is just emerging a gigantic essay, based on the exegesis of revelation, which is going to take up a large part of the *Bhāṣya*, as it comes to grips with, and transforms, all that is inescapable for the natural paths of thought. Following the lead of revelation through *Vāk*, it has already become clear that gnosis is the only ground from which we can authentically approach the question of Cause. But it is also the case that when the question is pursued concretely the Cause which is seen from the perspective of gnosis is seen as the all-knowing Cause. Gnosis becomes fused with the Cause, creating a mythic ground for further conduct of thought in this respect. The concrete "myth" of the omniscient Cause is alone adequate to carry forward the thought on the subject of Cause . That is the reason why Śankara concludes his comment on *sūtra* 2 with the observation that many passages of the Upanisads can be adduced, which refer to "the Cause that in its own essential (concrete) form is all-knowing" (*sarvajña-svarūpa-kārana*).

The "myth" of the omniscient Cause makes thought concrete and thus enables it to move forward, and, therefore, the next *sūtra* 3 is introduced, which says: "On account of the origin of/in the Vedic texts", (*śāstra-yonitvāt*). This *sūtra* declares that the omniscience of *Brahman* is to be maintained on account of the fact that *Brahman* itself is the source of the Veda and that, obversely, the Veda is the source of our knowledge of that.

In the preceding *sūtra* speculative Reason as a means of arriving at the Cause even if that were to correspond to *Brahman* conceptually has been rejected because this conceptual modality, like all others, is deemed non-significant in that it merely reflects some people's preference and nothing more. Further, if we had freely arrived at the notion of *Brahman* as a conceptual product, then

our concept-forming mechanism's self-reference would be held as the fundamental source of the knowledge and it will supplant *Vāk's* showing. In order to offset such a course *Vāk* has been summoned to reveal its own source in that it is none other than the disposition of *Brahman*, i.e., gnosis. This disposition eventuates in *Brahman's* self-communication through *Vāk*, and it is concrete insofar as it comprehends not only the secrets of our destiny, but also the secrets of our (and the world's) origin. Creation of the world is itself deemed an antecedent revelation and it is recalled concretely through what *Vāk* says. This procedure binds our destiny and our origin together under one single Force/Power (*śakti*), which makes out the Omniscient One (*sarvajña*) to be also the Omnipotent One (*sarva-śaktimān*), both concepts being constantly coupled together by Śankara. [We can easily notice that there lies here a message to Pūrva Mīmāṁsā also, which, by-passing the cause question, had concentrated on the Force/Power that takes us to our destiny, having rated that as the essence of *Vāk's* communication.]

The concreteness of the myth of the Omniscient One is essential for our being able to give a proper account of gnosis as the disposition of Ultimate Reality and consequently of our being able to think of Ultimate Reality in accordance with the way gnosis itself behaves, in that it offers itself as the non-shifting ground upon which we can anchor our thinking. Divine omniscience is such that in knowing all it communicates itself with all, wherein is to be located the very mystery of creation. Consequently, Cause and revelation become inseparable. Therefore, that which is the Cause is also the source of revelation, and accordingly it also becomes evident, obversely, that our knowledge of *Brahman* as the Cause in respect of both the creation of the world and of revelation is based on the *concrete* revelation itself (*Veda*) which presents to us the concrete myth of the Omniscient One.

Hence Śankara explains:

> *Brahman* is the source, i.e., the Cause of the Vedic texts, beginning with the *Ṛg Veda*, comprising many *vidyās*, which like a torch illuminate all things and are themselves the effulgence of the Omniscient. Now such texts as these, that is, of the nature of the *Ṛg Veda*, etc., with their many branches, wrapped in the quality of omniscience, do not occur apart from the Omniscient. It is well known in the world that the human authors from whom any science proceeds, for instance, Paṇini and others from

> whom Grammar arose, possess far more knowledge than the texts they have written. What, then, can be said about the Great Being, who is the source from whom, as if without effort, i.e. in the manner of sport and like a person's breathing out, are born the *Ṛg Veda*, etc. [cf. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, 2.4.10.], which are the basis of all classes and modes of a phenomena that we diversely encounter in the gods, human beings and animals? And unsurpassed omniscience and omnipotence belong to that Great Being. Alternately (interpreted), it (the *sūtra*) would also mean that the Vedic texts beginning with the *Ṛg Veda*, as described above, are the source of our knowledge of *Brahman*. The contention is that the source of our knowledge of the source (Cause) of the world (i.e., *Brahman*) is the Veda.[17]

Maintaining the omniscience of *Brahman* on account of its being the source of what *Vāk* says through the Veda entails the understanding of the latter as itself the source of our encounter with that omniscience. This entailment is articulated as though it is an alternative interpretation of the *sūtra*. It is for this reason that Śankara focusses attention on it and makes the remark (cited at the end of our last quotation): "Alternately (interpreted), it (the *sūtra*) would also mean that the Vedic texts beginning with the *Ṛg Veda*, as described above, are the source of our knowledge of *Brahman*. The contention is that the source of our knowledge of the Source, of Cause (*Brahman*) is the Veda." The knowledge that *Brahman* is the Cause is the first item of *Vāk's* expression of gnosis as a directive revelation through its own speaking. It is, however, so not by virtue of what gnosis itself is but rather by virtue of the predication of all our natural thinking on the subject of cause (i.e., by way of the question "what?", "whence?", "whereby?" and "wither?" or "unto what?", with the implicit question "wherefore?", or "why"), that *Vāk* authenticates this knowledge and at the same time *Brahman*-gnosis authenticates *Vāk*. This fact is expressed by the double meaning of the *sūtra*.

Śankara vigorously argues in favour of *Brahman*-gnosis as the essence of what *Vāk* speaks through the Veda as against the means-ends structure of *karma*, or the rite. The proponents of *karma* naturally appeal to Jaimini, the founder of their tradition of Vedic interpretation, who had laid down: "As the Veda has *karma* as its purpose those parts of it which do not conduce to that purpose are meaningless" (*āmnāyasya krīyārthatvāt ānarthakyamatadarthānām*), *Mīmāṁsā Sūtra*, 1.2.1. Based on this dictum, the followers of Pūrva Mīmāṁsā must, as Śankara observes, con-

clude that "the Vedānta passages (which speak in the language of *Brahman*-gnosis) are devoid of meaning", (*ato vedāntānam ānarthakyam*). At best they would deem such passages as "merely supplementary to *karma* injunctions and prescribe the meditative act as just another kind of rite", (*krīyā-vidhiśesatvam-upāsanādi-krīyāntara-vidhānārthatvam*).

Śankara continues to speak of *Brahman* as the Cause but in such a way that the Cause question is itself taken into gnosis. But it is necessary to recall that Śankara has been, from the commencement of the *Bhāsya*, actually addressing two conflicting positions – represented by Sāṁkhya and Pūrva-Mīmāṁsā. As for the latter of these two, Vedānta is united with it in a position based on the common ground of *Vāk's* speaking. As for the former, the opposition of Vedānta to it is of a different character, the common ground being that which characterizes all authentic rise of thought from the ground of consciousness, namely, the pressing interest in the problem of Cause. [It is easy to see, as we proceed through the text of the *Bhāṣya*, that other systems like Vaiśeṣika atomism and some schools of Buddhism are also brought in for examination as great variants of the position paradigmatically represented by Sāṁkhya.]

Now, moving to *sūtras* 3 and 4 Śankara is rather addressing Pūrva-Mīmāṁsā. We notice a movement from the common ground of all authentic natural thought, i.e., that wherefrom the burning interest in the problem of Cause is pursued, to the standpoint of revelation, i.e., the speaking of *Vāk*, which is shared by Vedānta and Pūrva-Mīmāṁsā alike. Nevertheless, Pūrva-Mīmāṁsā and Vedānta also stand separated as it were by a wide chasm. Hence it is that Śankara inveighs against the followers of Pūrva Mīmāṁsā and proposes the need for a truer grasp of what *Vāk* speaks as it has to do with the Cause (*Brahman*). The crucial issue in understanding the text is the "sequential connections", which is taken up next.

Sequential connections (samanvaya)

The *Sūtra* 4 says: "But such it is (i.e., as stated about the Cause) on account of the sequential connections (of revealing statements of the Veda)", (*tat tu samanvayāt*). It serves to show once again that *Brahman* is the Source of the world and of the Veda, and also that for this knowledge has, phenomenally speaking, the Veda alone as its source. Hence Śankara elaborates it (restating the

whole thesis around the notion of Force/Power for the benefit of Pūrva Mīmāṁsā, for which it is primary though in a different sense, as we have shown before):

> That the Omnipotent Cause of the origin, subsistence and dissolution of the world is *Brahman* is known from what *Vāk* speaks through the Upaniṣads. How is it so? Because that is the way of sequential connections. That follows from the purport of all Upaniṣadic statements insofar as their meaning is discerned. Accordingly, (it is said): "In the beginning, dear one, this was Being itself, one only without a second"; "The *Ātman* was this in the beginning, one only"; "That alone is this *Brahman*, without an earlier, without a later, without an inside, without an outside"; "This *Ātman* is *Brahman*, who perceives all"; "This is the immortal *Brahman* itself, in front"; and so on. It is not fitting to suppose any other meaning for passages like these inasmuch as it is determined that their sequential connections concern the essential nature of *Brahman.*[18]

Sequential connections and thought

As the *Bhāṣya* progresses through the stations set up by the first four *sūtras* we notice a clearer manifestation of the way thought is enabled to conduct itself in accordance with the way gnosis itself behaves. This is the essence of the *samanvaya*, or sequential connections, which are being steadily and systematically deployed. The question of Cause, which is the one that natural thought primordially grapples with, has now entered a new phase, thanks to the Upaniṣadic texts that speak of it. At this point we must recall our earlier observation: "In order to lead our thinking on the subject of Cause away from speculative orientation and into the questioning mode of *Brahman*-gnosis Reason is to be re-grasped as the power of connections among points in thought's passage to gnosis, including most of all the last one linking it with gnosis." Now we are able to see that this prospect is open to thought only because of *Vāk*, so that thought can ride on its back, so to say, and realize the connections in exactly the way in which *Vāk* manifests the connections in the things it speaks through the Vedic texts. As a result, thought's upward motion and gnosis's "downward" extension are seen to coalesce. [And further, thanks to this fact, thought is not thwarted by the barriers of unanswerable questions it is fated to ask or by the abyss of not-knowing it must encounter. And it is never pushed aside into some realm of Practical Reason so as to make do with what is less than the Absolute. By the grace of *Vāk*, thought is enabled to break through the barriers

such as the antinomies of Reason it constantly erects for itself in its quest for Ultimate Reality.]

Because *Vāk* provides the connections, thought can find its passageway to its own natural base, namely, consciousness, carrying gnosis with it. That is how the identity of consciousness and gnosis, so fundamental to Vedānta, is also realized. That is how the supreme utterance of *Vāk*, namely, "That thou art", serves as the perfect expression of the gnosis circle which thought is enabled to follow. In this manner the last link of thought, i.e., that which connects it to gnosis, is manifested also as its first link, i.e., that which connects it to consciousness. Without this, the very origin of thought in consciousness, even when approached in terms of the shock of wonder, must remain ever hidden and impervious to the most penetrating analysis, whether psychological, linguistic or ontological. But in terms of the gnosis circle as guided by the connections which *Vāk* provides we are enabled to get behind everything and begin our journey of thought from the absolute ground.

It is the belief of Vedānta that the question of Cause followed up to the end, on the basis of the speaking of *Vāk*, holds out the hope for thought's entry into the gnosis circle, of which the highest expression is the great statement of the Upaniṣad, "That thou art". But it is noticed that *Vāk* has been used by Pūrva Mīmāṁsā in a way that deflects thought from entering into that circle, and Pūrva Mīmāṁsā hence proposes the epic of the rite in its place as the authentic subject-matter of philosophy. In the philosophy of the rite the only "cause" worth caring about is the Force/Power dependent on the rite, as it will, it is believed, enable man to reach his destiny. Hence in refutation of this Śankara writes:

> What *Vāk* speaks is not to the end of dealing with the essential character of (man's) being a rite performer. The Upaniṣadic statements such as "then by what should one see and by whom" reject the causality of *karma* and its fruits. Nor can *Brahman*, despite the fact that in essential nature it is absolutely real, be an object encountered by the eye because the identity of *Brahman* with one's own self cannot be known except by virtue of *Vāk's* saying "That thou art". (The opponent, however, argues that) an instruction which does not command us either to give up something or to take on something (as a positive act) is pointless. (But) the fact that (such is not the case) is not a fault, because the highest human end to be obtained (or destiny to be realized) is only the knowledge of the oneness of

> *Brahman* with our own self, and it has nothing to do with either discarding or accepting something, and yet it expells all sorrow. Even though there is discussion of deities (i.e., dynamic principles) and of meditation pertaining to them in the course of what *Vāk* itself speaks, there is no contradiction (of our position). Even in the face of such discussion *Brahman* does not become a supplementary subject-matter (or epiphenomenon) of *karma*-injunctions. For in view of the fact that there is nothing either to discard or to accept in what is just unity, all notions of duality such as *karma*, the causal agent etc., are done away with.[19]

Śankara's extended essay on Cause devotes itself largely to showing (*vis-à-vis* Sāṁkhya) that *Brahman* is the Cause, on the one hand, and, on the other, to refuting the rite – oriented approach to philosophy (*vis-à-vis* Pūrva Mīmāṁsā). What is said about all other systems can be placed as appendices to this twin enterprise.

In showing that *Brahman* is the Cause, our ordinary, human investigations concerning the mystery of ours and the world's existence, (hovering around the question "why?", or "wherefore?") are led not so much to where an answer could be had in accordance with the way we ask it as to a point from which a perfect existence in thought is made possible without needing any other concrete answer than that *Brahman* is the Cause. That point is gnosis. Apart from it, thinking would be merely like being stretched on the anvil of the unknown to receive the relentless hammer-blows of the question "why?". Under gnosis thought has no greater vocation, no greater end to serve than to lead everything that comes along, every question that arises, to that point, hence following the circle of gnosis. [And no doubt, that which responds to the notion of Cause is merely the entrance door to *Brahman*, which in reality transcends all relations of cause and effect.]

However, goal-seeking man, paradigmatically represented by the utilitarian religious man, best typified and perhaps summed up by Pūrva Mīmāṁsā, is under perennial temptation to turn away from what is beyond our ken to know, and hence to follow some humanistic, positive path which orients thought to the problem of *how* we can reach our destiny or fulfill ourselves. However, for Pūrva Mīmāṁsā the humanism to be adopted is not ordinary or secular but transcendental inasmuch as both the vision of human destiny and the knowledge-how come from *Vāk*. [The belief in the absoluteness of *Vāk* continues to be the reason for Pūrva-Mīmāṁsā's polarity-in-kinship type of relation with Vedānta.] But

Śankara points out that such a project, transcendental though it be, is in fact based on a mere humanistic techné, while the Vedāntic project of *Brahma-vidyā* is not based on any humanistic techné, (*na puruṣa-vyāpāra tantrā brahma-vidyā*). On the contrary, he adds, "*Brahma-vidyā* is a science of the thing itself inasmuch as (the certainty of) its knowledge is not unlike what results in the encounter with any object by virtue of its own presence", (*pratyakṣādi-viṣaya-vastu-jñānatvāt vastu-tantraiva*). [Now, one may detect an apparent contradiction between this last statement and the one included in the previous quotation to the effect: "Nor can *Brahman*, despite the fact that in essential nature it is absolutely real, be an object encountered by the eye, because the identity of *Brahman* with our self cannot be known except by virtue of *Vāk's* saying 'That thou art'." However, there is no contradiction because the non-objectivity of *Brahman* still holds and what is now affirmed is the certainty with which we can know the thing itself, which is not unlike, or less than, that of our knowledge of the things that present themselves to the eye. And let it not be forgotten that what is said by *Vāk* (i.e., *śruti*) is always rated a higher kind of *pratyakṣa*, or presence before the eye.] Hence it is concluded: "It is not possible to suppose by any reasoning whatsoever that Being, *Brahman*, that is to say, the knowledge of *Brahman*, follows as a consequence of something (some rite) that is *to be* accomplished, (*evam bhūtasya brahmaṇastajjñānasya vā na kayācid yuktyā kāryānupraveśa kalpāyitum*). In conclusion, the reality of *Brahman* is not to be treated as an epiphenomenon or something that is generalised as a notion, mounted as it were on the transcendental, humanistic project which constitutes the epic of the rite. [A subtle and hardly noticeable opposition of *Brahman*-gnosis (*tat-jñāna*) with *Brahman* as Being (*evam bhūta*) occurs here. In some places *Brahman* and *Brahman*-gnosis are used as synonyms, and this has peculiar relevance in light of the Pūrva-Mīmāṁsā explanation of them as epiphenomenon of the rite.]

Summary of the comments on the first four sūtras

Śankara's comments on the first four *sūtras* are the seminal expressions of the Vedānta system, which he will work out in detail in the subsequent pages of the *Bhāṣya*. They served as the foundation on which his own immediate commentators and their commentators developed their own accounts of the system.[20] This is a witness to the self-sufficiency of this seminal statement.

These comments constitute the essential thesis of that which is elaborated as a monumental essay on Cause. And the examination of Cause, let us repeat, is simply an entrance door to the problem of Ultimate Reality and it itself, in the form in which it formally appears, is not the real subject-matter to be thought. It is only a surrogate that *stands in* for Ultimate Reality. It represents our way of approaching *Brahman* on account of the history of our thinking, grounded as it is in our phenomenal consciousness and attended by everything that that fact entails.

The exposition of *Brahman* as the Cause, given principally in terms of criticism of Sāṁkhyan speculation and Pūrva-Mīmāṁsā exegesis of *śruti* simply lays down what it is that we should understand as Ultimate Reality. This two-pronged criticism tells us: (a) that we must observe circumspection in approaching Ultimate Reality, which requires us to use texts that understand themselves as uniquely privileged channels of approach, and (b) that the exegesis of these texts must have as their proper goal not the understanding of texts themselves but the understanding of Ultimate Reality. [Now, this latter is a unique feature of Vedāntic hermeneutics, which is the reason why hermeneutics becomes a genuine tool of philosophy, and Śankara carries it out in a thorough-going and consistent manner.] These two serve as the fundamental paths for the investigation of Cause, and for the development of the gnosis circle.

THE UNFOLDING OF THE SYSTEM IN THE MAIN BODY OF THE *BHĀṢYA*

Our dialogue with the *Bhāṣya* is being conducted with the aim of discovering the unique way in which philosophical thought is grounded in gnosis. We shall continue to adhere to that aim as we approach the main body of the *Bhāṣya*, beginning at the 5th *sūtra* of Chapter I, from which point on the system unfolds itself in truly epic proportions. All important schools of India, both Vedic and non-Vedic, and their central doctrines are comprehended in the vast and highly complex debate that ensues from this. All the traditional sciences pertaining to language, etymology, interpretation and speculation, not to speak of the boundless resources of

Vedas, Epics and Purāṇas, are brought into play in this monumental task. However, as we are not undertaking a comprehensive study of this great text as a whole, and as our approach is determined only by the underlying purpose of our dialogue, which is the discovery of the relation between gnosis and philosophical thought, it would be imprudent for us to so broaden our scope as to cover the entire range of the debate. The individual items of this debate are covered by many a scholastic treatise in the post-Śankara literature. Our task rather is to raise afresh something that has not received adequate attention in the past and to do so in such a way as to bring it into a philosophical purview as we have set out to do from the beginning.

The great hermeneutical essay on Cause continues through the unfolding system of the *Bhāṣya*. [And Cause, as we have said "stands in" for Ultimate Reality.] Gnosis is what has directly to do with Ultimate Reality, and thought is what has its ground in gnosis and returns to it by a circular path. The nature of the gnosis circle has already been shown by way of the comments on the first four *sūtras*, and it is now begun to be drawn on a much larger scale using debate with the views of other schools as a means of expression. Now, the views of these other schools, no doubt, offer themselves concretely inasmuch as they belong to actual schools. However, they are also speculative possibilities *per se*. Thus Śankara remarks as he steps forward to draw the gnosis circle on the larger scale of a fully unfloded sytem, seṃinally expressed already *via* the principle of sequential connections:

> We have already stated how the Upaniṣadic passages, which are useful for the knowledge of *Brahman*, and of which the sequential connections have to do with knowing *Brahman* in one's own self, with no relation whatsoever to the rite, would actually lead to that gnosis. We have also stated how *Brahman* is omniscient and omnipotent and is the Cause of the origin, preservation and dissolution of the world. The followers of Sāṁkhya as well as others, for whom the cause is some other posited being and insofar forth are to be known by other means, interpret the passages of the Upaniṣads (too) as confirmation of their supposed causes.[21]

Accordingly, in drawing the circle of gnosis on a larger scale, the ways in which we would naturally think when we investigate Ultimate Reality are recounted from the beginning onward and are integrated with thought that has its ground in gnosis. [Vedānta expresses itself as much by exegeting what *Vāk* itself says as by criti-

cizing other schools in respect of their quest for Ultimate Reality, for which, as we have seen, the notion of Cause always stands in. In the history of Indian philosophy Sāṁkhya reigned as the paramount classical school devoted to the investigation of Cause which may very well be considered to have been its unique vocation. It is this fact that Śankara acknowledges when he describes it as the principal stalwart (*pradhāna malla*), by immobilizing whom, by virtue of the Nyāya maxim of *atideśa* (extension of scope), lesser stalwarts like the Vaiśeṣika atomism are also automatically disarmed.[22] Vedānta as philosophy has to be understood in two ways: firstly, as the exegetical presentation of what *Vāk* itself says, and secondly, as a series of systematically developed *vādas*, or logically laid positions. The latter are always presented in relation to some other position or cluster of positions. That is how such nomenclatures as *brahma-vāda* (*vāda* pertaining to *Brahman*), *advaita-vāda* (*vāda* of non-dualism), *māyā-vāda, avidyā-vāda*, etc., are employed. All of them are rebuttals of some existing *vādas*, which constitute the bulk of both Indian metaphysics and dialectics. Take away these interlocuting *vādas* and there will be no more reason to express Vedānta in any other terms than the exegesis of the texts which directly speak of *Brahman*. In other words only *Vāk* would remain. But then, it is also to be remembered that discourse is the body in which philosophy dwells among human beings and, as such, thought is fated to engage in *vādas*, even down to the level of disputations, which happens to be the lowest end of the meaning scale of that word. The philosophy of Vedānta uses Sāṁkhya and other systems as opponents, through debating with whom it spells itself out systematically.]

Being and Thinking

In drawing the gnosis circle on a large scale the first item considered is the relation between being and thinking, which is taken up in the group of *sūtras* (1.5.11), called *īkṣaty adhikaraṇam*, or, section on thinking. These *sūtras* furnish the key to refuting the Sāṁkhyan view that the ultimate material principle called *Pradhāna*, regarded as co-eternal with, and independent of, the other ultimate principle *Puruṣa* (Spirit), is the Cause of the world. Thus *sūtra* no. 5 says "On account of the word 'thinking', (*pradhāna*) is not (the Cause); it is not mentioned in the Vedic texts", (*īkṣater na aśabdam*). Commenting on this, Śankara observes:

> In Vedānta it is not possible to find the Cause of the world in *Pradhāna*, as Sāṁkhya contends. Indeed it (i.e., *Pradhāna*) has no basis in the Veda. How so? Because of the word 'thinking'; because of our hearing (in the Veda) of 'bethinking'. That is how we hear the Upaniṣad when it tells us: "Being alone, dear one, was this in the beginning, one only without a second", (*Chāndogya* 6.2.1). And it further says: "That one bethought to itself 'I shall make myself into many' and it created resplendent heat, etc.", (*Chāndogya* 6.2.3).[23]

The key word is *īkṣati*, which comes from the root *īkṣ*, to see, to behold, to bethink to oneself, to muse, to contemplate, etc. In *Chāndogya* 6.2.3 and *Aitareya* 1.1.1, Being is said to have 'bethought to itself' (*aikṣata*). [In *Praśna* 6.3, the expression is *īkṣām cakre*, with the same meaning.] The Upaniṣads tell us, and the *sūtra* repeats, that *īkṣa* is the causal relation within which Being holds everything to itself. And the fact that everything is so held becomes also, simultaneously, the holding on the part of all that is held. That which separates the holding and being held is constantly under assault, and that marks the character of gnosis, which is such that thought comes to its own when it recovers its ground in gnosis.

Here we learn something about thought in its essential character of being the access to Ultimate Reality which it is in its philosophical vocation. In this vocation, thought's quest for Ultimate Reality is also a quest for its own ground, to which it is simultaneously beckoned. Only by knowing its own ground can thought know itself, and thereby it also knows that it is more than what it appears to itself, that it sees itself only superficially.

However, the prospect of this critical self-knowledge resides not in what it can construct for itself unaidedly but in what comes outside itself, that is to say, through the speaking of *Vāk* about its origin. And *Vāk* says that Ultimate Reality through its essential disposition, i.e., gnosis, (primordially) put forth thought, wherein the reverse movement which we know as thought is reposed. This *sūtra* and the others in the *īkṣati* section while expressed in the form of an account of the genesis of the world is also an account of the origin and destiny of thought, for every statement about *Brahman* knowing itself the real purport thereof is to generate knowledge on the part of human beings. And that is done in the most authentic way of *Vāk's* speaking, i.e., via the myth of the Omniscient Creator. That is the reason why Śankara argues that the word *īkṣate* is used "in a way paralleling the (Pūrva Mīmāṁsā)

use of the word *yajate* (he, she, or it sacrifices), and that, accordingly, its meaning, far from being derived from its root, is to be sought in (its capacity to *produce*) the object", (*īkṣater api ca dhātvartha nirdeśo'bhipretaḥ yajateritivat, na dhātunirdeśaḥ*). Thought, therefore, is a productive agent and is similar to sacrifice in its utterly heroic, ontological function. But there are two important differences. Firstly, for *īkṣate*, in view of the fact that the account of the genesis of the world is simultaneously an account of the origin and destiny of thought, its epistemological meaning is yielded only in its reverse application such as this statement expresses. In other words, what it really intends to say something about is man's thought insofar as it seeks Ultimate Reality. Secondly, inasmuch as what it "produces" is not something that has not been there but what is already there pre-eminently (i.e., as gnosis) its productivity is infinitely greater and therefore, infinitely more heroic.

Thought at its root is gnosis itself. Only in a secondary way of talking can we even speak of gnosis having an object which it illuminates or of itself as an object that is sought. That is why Śankara compares our speaking of thought in reference to Ultimate Reality (or in our own language as the extension of its disposition, i.e., gnosis) to our speaking of the Sun's shining even though there is no object for that activity.[24]

Sāṁkhya, which is the classical philosophy of Cause outside the Upaniṣads, is an account of the origin of the world. And it is forced to begin the account with a doctrine of the Being whose thought is the Cause (origin) of the world. In this enterprise it found it necessary to appropriate the Upaniṣadic myth of the Omniscient Cause, the originating thinker, which is Being itself. Although not taken in essential Upaniṣadic sense, Sāṁkhya borrows this myth from the Upaniṣads because it serves Sāṁkhya's purpose. And, no doubt, the myth could only come by virtue of what *Vāk* itself has spoken. It could not be invented. And once it is accepted in any form and with whatever definition, it would help one to penetrate the haze that surrounds the problem of origin – which, no doubt, is surrounded by haze. However, seeking its own definition, Sāṁkhya substituted *Pradhāna* in the place of *Brahman* as the Being that is to be understood as the originating thinker.

Śankara recounts the Sāṁkhyan appropriation of the myth of the Omniscient One in a very telling manner. Sāṁkhya, whose

dualism has separated conscious Spirit (*puruṣa*) and non-conscious Matter (*Prakṛti*, or *Pradhāna*), so radically that the former plays no part at all in the genesis of the world and of thought (being completely devoid of any such ability) has to seek to ground the myth of the Omniscient Creator in *sattva* (meaning goodness, buoyancy, transparency to light and finally, capacity to reflexively appropriate consciousness), which is one of the three *guṇas* (qualitative strands) that constitute the latter. Accordingly, Sāṁkhya, Śankara tells us, considers *Pradhāna* itself to be that which functions as the Omniscient Being. This Śankara argues is not possible. And so he writes: "As it is devoid of a witnessing consciousness, the function of *sattva* cannot be expressed by the verb 'to know'. And non-conscious *Pradhāna* is not (by definition) a witness. Hence *Pradhāna* cannot be considered omniscient", (*asākṣika sattva vṛttiḥ jānāti na abhīdhiyate. na ca acetanasya pradhānasya sākṣitvam asti. tasmāt anupapannam pradhānasya sarvajñatvam*). In conclusion, "only *Brahman* is properly the supreme omniscient Cause of the world", (*sarvajñam mukhyam brahma jagataḥ kāraṇam iti yuktam*).

Since, however, the crux of the matter is how we understand the word 'to think' (and with it the word 'to know') ascribed to Being, Sāṁkhya has a logically consistent clue to offer. It says that the word *īkṣati*, to think, must be taken as figurative (*gauṇa*), or as just imprecise common usage (*aupacārika*), along with other such usages which we cannot do without. Hence as Śankara points out, for Sāṁkhya, the statement "Being thought" is of a piece with other well-known figurative expressions like "the sea is angry". Sāṁkhya's appropriation of the myth of the Omniscient Creator, strange as it may seem, is logically accountable on the basis of the figurative interpretation of the word 'to think'. The myth itself, however, serviceable as a place to put the anchor in developing an explanation of the origin of the world, is in fact for Sāṁkhya something to be approached as no more than a useful metaphor. And how frequently both metaphysical and scientific theories are anchored, in the last analysis, on assumptions of a metaphorical character. For instance, how naively we speak so often of "Nature's own design", "History's own purpose" and so on! No doubt, neither our daily life nor our thinking, not to speak of theoretical speculation, will be possible without the unique privilege that metaphor confers, the highest of which is the sustention of myths which serve as places to put the anchors necessary

for theoretical explanations. This indeed is to be granted. However, Sāṁkhya's appropriation of the myth of the Omniscient Creator goes beyond that. It is taken over from the Upaniṣads. But although in the Upaniṣads the myth of the Omniscient Creator is intentionally concrete, Sāṁkhya has made it metaphorical through its interpretation. Now, the essential distinction between the Vedāntic and Sāmkhyan interpretations of the statement, "Being thought", (and their approaches to the myth of the Omniscient Creator) is one between the concrete and the metaphorical. [And we say 'concrete', rather than 'literal' which is a category that has no place at all in the understanding of Vedic texts, and consequently in its philosophy.]

The myth of the All-knowing one is held as indispensable for thought about origin. It has its basis in Ultimate Reality itself as made known in the speaking of *Vāk*. Could it also be constructed either from our speculation which relies on our habitual metaphorical language as well as from a metaphorical exegesis of what *Vāk* itself has spoken? Sāṁkhya, however, produces a new justification for the metaphorical exegesis of the Upaniṣadic statement, "Being thought", for it occurs in a context where we also read that the products of that thinking, viz., resplendent heat (*tejas*), water (*āpaḥ*) and food (*anna*), also thought. The latter could admittedly only have a figurative meaning, for resplendant heat, etc., as is well-known, cannot think. The answer is in the next *sūtra* (no. 6): "(*Vāk's* saying that Being thought) is not metaphorical because of the word *ātman*", (*gauṇaścet na ātmaśabdāt*).

In the comment on this *sūtra*, Śankara makes a distinction between primary sense (*mukhyārtha*) and figurative sense (*gauṇārtha*), which corresponds exactly to "concrete intention" and "metaphorical intention" respectively. He shows that the statement of the Upaniṣads, "It (Being) thought", is a concrete expression of the concrete myth of the Omniscient Creator (which is *Brahman* itself) because the same passage says that it (Being) as the *jīva-ātman* primordially entered its first creations, viz., resplendent heat, water and food. The identity between Being and self (*ātman*) is expressed subsequently more clearly in the famous passage, "That is Being, That is the *ātman*, That thou art, O Śvetaketu", (*Chāndogya* 6.9.1-6.16.3, stated in a refrain).

The key is furnished by the word *ātman*, the self, which may more properly, in this context, be taken as self-hood, or subjectivity, as that is the essential factor which makes it possible to

attribute thought to Being. [The double reference of the word *ātman*, which we have become acquainted with in the Upaniṣads, i.e., as pertaining the human beings and to *Brahman*, needs to be recalled here. In this sense, subjectivity comprehends both the human self and *Brahman*, the Ultimate *Ātman*.] If we should continue to speak of thinking as an "activity" of Being and should do so without heeding to subjectivity, our speaking should remain metaphorical. But *Vāk* speaks concretely and not figuratively when it says, "Being thought".

Sāṁkhya is the paramount instance of a philosophy which fails to grasp subjectivity. But philosophy can be saved from sinking deeper into the quick-sand of metaphorical speaking and thinking, that is insofar as they have to do with Ultimate Reality, only by grasping the subjectivity of the Being that thinks, which, however, only *Vāk* can bring home to us. [Nevertheless, there is a legitimate order of metaphorical speaking and thinking and that belongs to everyday life, on the one hand, and to the realm of the rite, on the other. But this should not be mistaken for the domain of the quest for Ultimate Reality.]

The more we think and the more we speak, the more is unfolded, *provided* the ground of our thought is gnosis and the ground of our speaking is *Vāk*. The word *vikṣepa*, used in the sense of unfoldment, or opening up, stands as much for the world's becoming as for philosophy's expansion into a structure. In that way the expanded essay on Cause is a running commentary on the unfoldment of the world of variety from the Being that bethought to itself. In any other way philosophy will only be a series of speculative structures governed in the last resort by metaphors which do not know that they are metaphors and what they are metaphors of. In order to be a real, running commentary such as indicated and not a series of disparate, speculative structures, it has to hold fast to its ground. That is what Śankara shows with unrelenting rigour.

Now, to run with the unfolding world in its course, to be a true commentary, is what philosophy does as its vocation of dwelling among human beings, that is, through discourse. It has another and deeper vocation, expressed by the word *mokṣa* or freedom. In this word *mokṣa*, a new way of revealing the ontological depth of subjectivity is introduced. We observed above that self-hood is subjectivity and that it is the essential factor which makes it possible to attribute thought to Being. Now, subjectivity which has already

been pre-figured by the notion of witness (*sākṣī*), and reinforced further by showing that it is the self-hood of Being as Thinker, to which an entity like *Pradhāna*, devoid of subjectivity, cannot lay claim, is now invited to show its ultimate sign, leaving no room for any more quibbling about it. That sign is decisive. Accordingly, subjectivity is now to be understood as that which is essentially oriented towards *mokṣa*. Hence the next *sūtra* (no. 7) says: "On account of there being an instruction unto *mokṣa* (in what *Vāk* has spoken) for one who resolutely observes it", (*tanniṣṭasya mokṣopadeśāt*).

What is resolutely observed is gnosis, which is the essential disposition of Being (i.e., *Brahman*) itself, expressed by *Vāk* in the words, "it bethought to itself". Our resolute observance (*niṣṭhā*) is thought, which is our responsiveness in like form to the disposition of *Brahman*. And *Vāk* performs two functions, i.e., that of unconcealing gnosis and of directing our thought to respond in like form, or, in other words, in accordance with it. By virtue of *Vāk's* showing the path, thought carries in itself *the ultimate sign of subjectivity*, i.e., *mokṣa*, as the "goal" to which it is directed. This signifies no ordinary existential orientation of thought, for the impulsion to *mokṣa* (*mumukṣatva*) is identical with the desire to know Brahman (*Brahmanjijñāsā*). This is fundamental to Vedānta's ontology of human existence and it is a realistic ontology, where the subject of freedom, i.e., the self, is real and concrete because *mokṣa* is real and concrete. On the contrary, Sāṁkhya, which also understands itself as a serious philosophy of freedom, is actually too afflicted by an inability to provide an authentic view of freedom because it has no authentic theory of the subject of freedom. Consequently, it is forced to push its figurative interpretation further and further, right up to the concept of freedom itself, resulting in a metaphorical view of freedom, and the consequence, from the Vedāntic point of view, can only be incalculable spiritual detriment. Hence Śankara writes:

> If the sacred text, which is the source of perfect spiritual knowledge, were to instruct a person, who, though still ignorant, nonetheless, desires freedom (i.e., *mokṣa*) to the effect that the non-conscious (i.e., *Pradhāna*), known to be not-self, is in fact self (i.e., the subject of freedom), that person would, in a way, reminiscent of the (proverbial) blind man catching hold of the bull's tail, (instead of taking the bull by the horn, that is), be thwarted in his effort to realize the goal of human existence and be thrown into meaninglessness.[25]

The expression we have translated as "the goal of human existence" in a conventional manner is *puruṣārtha*, which may be quite correctly rendered "the meaning of human existence". The opposite of it is "meaningless" (*anartha*) as mentioned in the same statement. It is quite clear that the *puruṣārtha* that is intended here is *mokṣa* and *mokṣa* alone, the ultimate goal, or meaning, of human exixtence. Now, if, as we have said above, subjectivity is that which is oriented towards *mokṣa*, it has to be defined by the same orientation. That means the definition has to be derived from the concrete actuality of *mokṣa*, which is the goal towards which the subject, *puruṣa*, is oriented and the criterion by which its meaning is defined. In this present context it is appropriate to understand *puruṣa* as "subject". The unique nature of the *puruṣa* derived solely from the concrete actuality of *mokṣa*, concerning which *Vāk* gives instruction, is what should be referred to by the word "subjectivity" (for which, however, the text itself gives no equivalent, which is not surprising). From the Vedāntic standpoint, Sāṁkhya, or any such philosophy, which approaches freedom in any other way and without the benefit of the directing instruction of *Vāk* will forever miss subjectivty and be thrown into meaninglessness. [It is necessary at this point to clarify that the Sāṁkhyan use of the word *Puruṣa*, according to its dualistic ontology, is not at all the same as *puruṣa* in the sense of subject or, more precisely, subject-of-freedom, in the way it is used here. This distinction we mark by writing the former with a capital 'P' and the latter with a small 'p'.]

Now, we have already been ushered into the realm of subjectivity. We have just been shown that *the subject is the being that is oriented towards its own freedom* insofar as subjectivity cannot be attributed to a being like *pradhāna*, which is described as working for another being's freedom. Therefore, subjectivity construed in this way is the rock against which the entire understanding of the project of liberation as metaphorical must be dashed to pieces. Existentially, subjectivity is the unconditional disposition towards *mokṣa* on the part of the subject, which means that, in other words, we must describe subjectivty as *being-unto-freedom*. Furthermore, *such a disposition on the part of the subject of freedom is itself possible only in the amplitude of Ultimate Reality's own disposition which we call gnosis*. And it is revealed as a direction-giving instruction by *Vāk*, i.e. *moksopadeśa*.

In the foregoing three *sūtras* of the *īkṣati* section, we have been led from Being and its thinking, through the self, to freedom, all the way learning to eschew the metaphorical in favour of the con-

crete. At length we have gained a new understanding of subjectivity, that is, as being-unto-freedom. Let that truth be stated directly and then obversely in the following way: the subject is the being that is oriented to its own freedom; only that which is oriented towards its own freedom can be considered being.

In the light of this we can understand why Śankara refutes the strange theory of freedom that Sāṁkhya propounds, which involves a complete dissociation between the subject of freedom and the agent of freedom. For Sāṁkhya the subject of freedom is *Puruṣa*, the spirit which remains in splendid isolation from all activities of *Prakṛti*, or *Pradhāna*, including the very creation of the conditions which call for the project of liberation. The *Puruṣa* of Sāṁkhya remains a mere spectator, although in some strange way it is the subject of freedom as well as the beneficiary in *Pradhāna's* struggle for freedom.[26]

If the subject and the agent were utterly distinct and eternally different the whole project of liberation would become artificial, conducted as it is on the basis of an artifice. An agent of freedom which is not the subject and is not even remotely a beneficiary of freedom can only be an artifice. Clearly, what is true of the project of liberation must apply to thought as well, which too becomes artificial. When an artifice is set up in order to account for the project of liberation and for thought, the authenticity of both is at stake.

For Vedānta the subject of the project and the agent are one and the same, i.e., the self, more aptly expressed by the adoption of the word *puruṣa*. If it is otherwise, as held by Sāṁkhya, the agent would be an artifice and as such it is to be eventually discarded. That is the reason for the next *sūtra* (no. 8): "*Vāk* does not say (anything) about (the agent) having to be discarded", (*heyatva avacanāt ca*)".

Śankara in his comment on this employs the metaphor of the invisible *Arundhatī* star, raising the question whether an artifice can be the focus of freedom-striving through gnosis:

> As a person points to the *Arundhatī* star by pointing to another first making him believe that some other celestial body in its proximity is *Arundhatī*, although it is not, and while pointing so also instructs him that he should later reject it in favour of the real *Arundhatī*, so it would seem (if Sāṁkhya were right) that *Vāk* would tell (one who strives for *mokṣa* that (ultimately) what had been pointed to as the focus of freedom-striving is not the self (i.e., the subject to which *mokṣa* pertains). But *Vāk* does not tell us so.[27]

The word *heya*, "to be discarded", which comes from the sacrificial lexicon suggests not only the idea of throwing away something into a disposal bag as it were, but also that of which the usefulness is exhausted and hence that which is no longer fit to be associated with what is sacred. For Vedānta the agent is not *heya* as it is identical with the subject of freedom.

The discussion up to this point has been occasioned by the original question as to what is the Being that thinks, finally leading up to the notion of subjectivity as being-unto-freedom, where the agent is none other than the subject. It is not there as something eventually to be thrown away, for the contrary is the case. So now, the same truth is stated in a positive way in the next *sūtra* (no. 9) thus: "Because of *Vāk's* speaking about absorption of the agent into the Self", (*svāpyāyāt*).

Based on this *sūtra*, Śankara elucidates the meaning of the being, at once the subject of freedom and agent, of which *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, 6.8.1, says: "When this *puruṣa* sleeps, dear one, it verily becomes one with its own Self, becomes absorbed into its own Self. Therefore he is said to be sleeping. It is absorbed into itself", (*yatra etat puruṣaḥ svapīti nama satā somya tadā sampanno bhavati, svapīto bhavati. tasmādena svapītyācakṣate, svam hi apīto bhavati*). With the aid of the etymology which the Upaniṣadic passage itself has provided, Śankara analyses the word *svapīti* (to sleep) thus: "*sva* and *ī* preceded by the prefix *api* means to be absorbed", (*apipūrva-svaiter layārthatvam prasiddham*).

In *Vāk's* speaking about the absorption of the agent of the project of liberation (which it does because the agent is itself the subject of the project) we have been led to clarification of subjectivity, i.e., as being-unto-freedom. And subjectivity is marked by the sign it carries, viz., *mokṣa*. It has also been made clear to us that we have no other authentic way of knowing ourselves as being. Now, the dual meaning of *sat* as Being and as being, is something that we have noted as we have moved forward from the initial *sūtra* of the *īkṣati adhikaraṇa*.

The understanding of human subjectivity as being-unto-freedom has been brought to us through a series of steps marking the systematic unfoldment of the meaning of Ultimate Reality, i.e. *Brahman*, as the Being that thinks. It is, however, easy to be misled into believing that the understanding of human subjectivity is the goal to which the unfoldment has been taking place and that, therefore, we may now kick off the ladder by which we have

climbed to that understanding. But such a belief would be thoroughly un-Vedāntic as it is not the case that human subjectivity is henceforth going to constitute the supreme subject-matter of philosophy. For nothing but nothing can ever take the place of absolute *Brahman*, which is what makes everything else authentic. Subjectivity is marked out from other entities like *Pradhāna* because the subject and agent of freedom, the *ātman*, (small 'a') is enfolded in the undifferentiated self-identity of *Brahman*, and as such absorbed into it, *svāpyāyāt*). Paradoxical as it may sound, it is precisely this capability to be absorbed entirely into the Absolute that makes subjectivity authentic. The authentic subject is not some single one (*Der Einzige*) that stands apart from *Brahman* because it becomes itself only in the denial of itself within the sovereign perspective of *Brahman*. The essence of its individuality too rests in that denial, which is the highest sacrifice that a being is capable of making, viz., giving up its beingness, its *sattā*. This is the existential way of thought conducting itself in accordance with the way gnosis itself behaves. [When beingness goes Being remains.]

Now, the obverse side of subjectivity in its relation to the Absolute is also worthy of attention, namely, that only in subjectivity, or in other words, only by the silencing of all objectivities does Ultimate Reality show itself. *Pradhāna* is not only alien to this way of Ultimate Reality's showing itself, but stands in its way. These two sides of the same truth continue to be presented formally by the endless reiteration that *Pradhāna* is not the Cause of the world, the concept 'cause' standing in for that which constitutes the highest subject-matter of philosophic inquiry. *Brahman* alone remains that subject-matter and that fact is affirmed from all possible standpoints, exhaustively catalogued in subsequent portions of the text. There we find a complete mapping out of the world of concepts, no doubt with a considerable predominance of those of cosmology as might legitimately be expected. In anticipation of that are stated the last two *sūtras* (no. 10 and 11) of the present *adhikaraṇa*: "On account of the uniform direction in which the texts move", (*gatisāmānyāt*); and, "because we hear (*Vāk* say so)," (*śrutatvāñca*).

Śankara cites a few passages from the Upaniṣads, merely for initial instantiation, to show that "by means of the (inner) essay pertaining to the uniform movement of the Upaniṣadic texts they are interpreted as arguing, or laying, that conscious Being (i.e.,

Brahman is the Cause", (*gatisāmānyopāsanena ca sarvo vedāntāḥ cetana kāraṇa vādina iti vyākhyātam*). [The significance of *cetana* ("conscious Being") presumably is that it generates authentic subjectivity, in which alone can Ultimate Reality show itself.] It is also necessary to note that a new hermeneutical principle, i.e., the uniform direction in which the texts move (*gatisāmānya*, or *gatisāmānyatā*) has been enunciated, and it is carried through from now on. This principle, no doubt, functions within the framework of sequential connections (*samanvaya*), but rather as a way of demonstrating by discourse (*vāda*) the absolute truth of *Brahman*, and as such it is "accompanied by demonstrative reason" (*nyāya pūrvakam*), as Śankara writes.

At this point we notice that a wider stage is being set for Vedānta as philosophy to express itself, that is to say, conduct itself in accordance with the way gnosis itself behaves. The stage is wide, but at its centre is placed the quintessential concepts and symbols of the Veda which may serve as vehicles for philosophy's fuller self-expression through discourse, especially discourse with those whose thinking is already nurtured by these concepts and symbols, however imperfectly. As vehicles for philosophy's self-expression henceforth they are going to constitute the body of what continues to be regarded as the essay on Cause, which as we know is a discussion of *Brahman*.

Now, for a modern man too, who is not nurtured in any way by the quintessential concepts and symbols of the Veda, and who draws the substance of his discourse (and hence of his thought) from the lived and experienced world alone, and from anything beyond it only to the extent that it is already dissolved into that world, this new stage set has some relevance on account of its potential repercussions that go beyond its boundaries, and they are not difficult to tune into.

For the wider discourse has been introduced what may be broadly expressed as a "second level" for the conduct of philosophical thought, besides the essential or original "level" in which thought is envisaged as direct response in like form to gnosis, and where what *Vāk* is speaking as it itself wants to speak is alone norm, rendering man's own speaking in response to it a kind of denial of all that is drawn from the concepts and symbols of the Vedas, no less than those drawn from the world (and hence *neti, neti*). But then comes a second level which both permits and warrants a different kind of speaking and thinking.

This new stance may be called a "two-level" approach to thought. Is this a mere ontological accommodation or a bending to the needs of discourse in that it is the form in which philosophy dwells among human beings? That is not the case because it is not a tactic for facing a contingency, and in that sense the stance itself is not new. Rather, in its essence it is the articulation of what is already there in the integral composition of the Vedic texts. Hence Śankara writes: "*Brahman* is comprehended in two "modalities", as qualified by the limiting adjuncts of name, form, change and modification, and in the opposite manner, that is as devoid of all adjuncts", (*dvirūpam hi brahma avagamyate nāma-rūpa-bheda-vikāropādhi-viśiṣṭam, tadviparītam ca sarvopādhi vivarjitam*).

This takes into account a beginningless condition in which thought happens, one which even brings it into being, that is, as the extension of gnosis, through a refracting medium, as it were. That condition is *avidyā (agnosis)*, which envelopes thought all around as well as permeates it from within. It is this *avidyā* that gives thought a sense of autonomy and by the same token (on the reverse side) gives the thinker, i.e., the subject, an unconquerable sense of loneliness, as if gnosis is not there. However, Vedānta does not approach *avidyā* nor the autonomous-cum-lonely situation of thought from the inside but rather, as it becomes it, from the ground of gnosis. [Here we may also recall our discussion at the beginning of this chapter how consciousness is put in a beam of light from gnosis, whereby *avidyā* is manifested *ab initio*.] For the objective is to grasp the condition in which thought is held and hence to redeem it.

The point from which the process of redemption begins is the understanding of *avidyā* as already put under gnosis (and decidedly not before) as a *splitter* in the very operation of thought, whereby the thinker and the thought (i.e., *Brahman*) stand, as it were, apart and facing each other as subject and object, which is precisely what Śankara says in the following words (obviously speaking from the ground of gnosis): "There are thousands of sentences which show *Brahman's* two modalities, predicated on the difference between gnosis and *avidyā*; in the condition of *avidyā Brahman* bears the differentiating sign of thinker and the thought", (*iti ca evam sahasraso vidyāvidya-viṣaya-bhedena brahmaṇo dvirūpatam darśayanti vākyāni. tatra avidyā avasthāyām brahmaṇa upāsya-upāsakādi-lakṣaṇaḥ sarvo vyavahāraḥ*).

This point is driven home by him by appealing to the para-

digm statement on duality in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (4.5. 25): "Where there is duality as it were, there one sees another... but where the *Ātman* is all this, then whom can one see and by whom is seen?", (*yatra hi dvaitamiva bhavati tad itara itaraṁ paśyati...yatra tu asya sarvam ātmaivābhūt tat kena kaṁ paśyet*). The validity of duality is accepted as an essential and realistic part of the process of grasping the condition in which thought is held and of redeeming it. [By the same token dualism is rejected as detrimental to this process.]

The rest of the text of the *Bhāṣya* can be understood from this point on with the two levels of thought as the key. In a formal way these two levels are called "higher" (*para*) and "lower" (*apara*), *Brahman* too being described accordingly as *para Brahman* and *apara Brahman* or *nirguṇa Brahman* and *saguṇa Brahman*, respectively. However, this formal distinction ought not to be literally applied in philosophy. For if that which is indicated by the word *para* carries the implication of *neti, neti*, then as far as any description of *Brahman* or the expansion of discourse is concerned, that is the end of the road. No deductive, tautological structure is possible such as is essential for a theological ontology. We cannot even attribute perfection to *Brahman* because that would be nothing more than an exercise in tautology based on certain innate concepts. [All perfections are conceivable for the human mind, whereby a Supreme Being can be tautologically envisioned so as to hold all those perfections, rejecting all imperfections.] However, this is where the *Sūtra* and the *Bhaṣya* show their sources. They do not follow the logical path of *neti, neti* alone in disregard of "thousands" of Vedic statements where *Brahman's* perfections such as Supreme Cause, Creator, the Omniscient, the All-powerful, etc., are mentioned. Thus *neti, neti* itself is re-linked to them and is interpreted not as just Void (which would be the case if the path followed were independent of the Veda) but as the highest expression of fullness (*sampūrṇam*) in comparison with which the very Vedic descriptions of *Brahman* in positive terms appear as depleted (*nyūnam*). In this way this linkage between the two levels is something not to be missed. This is what makes the bodying forth of Vedāntic philosophy possible. And yet *neti, neti* is implanted within the heart of the structure of perfections even though drawn from the Vedas. But that structure is essential for discourse. However, because of *neti, neti*, while discourse is being made, it is also being unmade. But the unmaking

is within the making, and the more is made the more is unmade. This is essential for the gnosis circle, and that is the course the essay on Cause is to follow.

The Being that is to be known: the Question approached through Cosmology

The *sūtras* 6-11, which we have just discussed, have been the basis for considering the question as to the Being that thinks. Now, beginning with the *sūtra* no. 12, preparation is being made to raise the complementary question, what is the Being that is *to be known*, and hence commands thought absolutely? The clearly anticipated answer to both is: it is *Brahman* which thinks, therefore knows, and is to be known, therefore to be thought. The two questions are the two complementary sides of what is but one, formally expressed as the question of Cause. According to Vedānta, these two are inseparable and they must, therefore, not only appear but appear together in every investigation of Being. And further, insofar as they are the two sides of what is but one, i.e., the question of Cause, they both point to the same Being, i.e., *Brahman*, than which there is no other.

The fact that we are led to the same Being in answer to different questions reveal an underlying connection between the questions themselves as having also originated from the same Being, a fact which makes it inevitable for them to be grasped as complementary. Here we also learn the inner meaning of gnosis, defined by us as the disposition of Ultimate Reality, which may now be expressed as *the amplitude between the two poles of Being*, i.e., *as the one that thinks, therefore knows, and as the one to be known, therefore to be thought*. And as for thought, also defined by us as the extension of gnosis, it may be expressed as *the tuning into, or as attunement with, this amplitude*. Here, then, in this amplitude of gnosis we find the inner space for what Heidegger has described as the attunement (*Gestimmtheit*) or tuned correspondence (*gestimmte Entsprechen*) between being and Being. (And here we also begin to perceive the deeper possibilities of what we have described as thought approached from gnosis as the ground. This also gives us a clue to Śankara's definition of Vedānta as philosophy, which too we cited in our Introduction: "It is the vision of Ultimate Reality in which there is no distinction between

gnosis, what is to be known and the knower" (*jñāna-jñeya-jñātṛ-bheda-rāhitaṁ paramārtha-tattva darśanam*). [We cannot, however, pretend that these deeper possibilities are to be directly addressed to Heidegger's formulation of Being and the correspondence between being and Being, for it moves in a different path from what we envisage in the framework of Vedānta. And no philosophical formulation can be corrected from the standpoint of another philosophy. In any case, what is aimed at here is *Vedānta's* own self-articulation in such a way as to be seized as philosophy.]

Now that our attention has been drawn to Being in the form of the question as to what it is that is to be known – shifting from the original pole of Being as that which thinks, therefore knows, – the path of thought to that end is going to be discussed. That path, as already shown in a preliminary way, is cosmology – and cosmology, because, as a form of investigation, it conforms to man's inherent and natural way of thinking.

However, the cosmology that is going to be used is not a speculative cosmology reared on some *a priori* considerations. In that sense what is undertaken is the critical use of an already existing sacred cosmology, Vedic cosmology that is, rather than the production of a cosmological theory *ab initio*. The latter kind of undertaking would be entirely alien to Vedānta, which turns away from speculation that is not already grounded in what *Vāk* has spoken, that is to say, not actually found in the Vedic texts – such is the framework within which it operates. However, this turning away is not an indication of aversion but of a positive will to penetrate to what is beyond the specific speculations that lies unattendedly behind them. We may describe that which lies behind as the matrix of speculative possibilities. Out of this matrix come all particular speculations. And *Vāk* calls it to itself. This is the call (*āmantraṇa*) of *Vāk* and as such it marks its entry into this hidden matrix.

The call, however, is not made through some generic categories or even through some *a prioris* but through the concrete, quintessential concepts and symbols of the *Vedas*. That there are generic categories and *a prioris* is by no means denied. On the contrary, it is understood that they find their usefulness in the call of *Vāk* to the matrix of speculations.

As for these Vedic concepts and symbols, it is not necessary to attribute any *a priori* virtues to them because, on the one hand, they themselves are the means by which *Vāk* calls all cosmological

speculative possibilities to their matrix, and, on the other, the *a prioris* themselves find their usefulness in that call. However, their choice is not arbitrary because as a group of terms they have always done duty in the Vedas as the basis of that holistic structure of experience and perceptions which the Vedic community had accepted as the sacred cosmos – and the Sāṁkhyans too share in that community.

The fundamental question is, what is the cosmology that is organized upon this nucleus of terms for? It is, no doubt, agreed by the participants in the on-going debate that it is certainly not for the sake of knowing the cosmos, at least not for the sake of knowing the cosmos alone. For Vedānta and for Sāṁkhya alike cosmology is the path that thought takes in its quest for something else, i.e., Ultimate Reality, which is the one to be known. For Vedānta this something else, this Ultimate Reality, is *Brahman*, for Sāṁkhya it is *Pradhāna*, both predictably enough.

The absolute difference in the ontologies of what is to be known, to which cosmology provides a passage-way, is already prefigured in the respective understandings of cosmology itself. In Sāṁkhya there is no call of *vāk* to the hidden matrix of cosmological speculations (and, therefore, Sāṁkhya is described as *aśabdam*, i.e., devoid of *Vāk's* speaking.) As such, Sāṁkhya is wedded to one speculative system, regarding it as literally true. And so it is bound to interpret the cosmology expressed by the nucleus of Vedic concepts and symbols accordingly and to look upon the concepts and symbols as categories, in fact as *a priori* categories. For Vedānta *Brahman* alone remains the only Being to be known, the one absolute goal of philosophical thought, the quintessential concepts and symbols of the Vedas, the nucleus of terms, upon which the sacred cosmology rests, having to be understood merely as surrogates for *Brahman*. [It is on account of this rigorous grounding in *Brahman* as the Being to be known that Vedānta eventually reinterprets cosmology itself in terms of (1) *Vāk*, otherwise known as the Veda (the eternal IDEA), and (2) *Avidyā* – in a mutually complementary way.]

The nucleus of terms first considered in the *Brahma Sūtra* is chosen not arbitrarily but on account of the evident fact that it forms the core of the holistic, structured Reality maintained by the Vedas, which also conforms to the deepest spiritual aspiration of man. The terms, accordingly are:

> That which is of the nature of bliss (*ānanda-maya*), 1.1.12-19; The Being within the source of light symbolied by the Sun as well as within the organ of perception of light symbolized by the eye (*antasthaḥ*), 1.1.20-21; Space/Ether (*ākāśa*), 1.1.22; Life-force (*prāṇa*), 1.1.23, 28-31; Light (*jyotiḥ*) 1.1.24-27.

While Sāṁkhya interprets them as standing for *Pradhāna*, Śankara equates them with *Brahman*. Each of these terms, according to Śankara, is a surrogate, i.e., within the sacred cosmology, for *Brahman*. At the end he gives a gist of his argument, hermeneutically grounded in the Vedas and the Vedic sciences (actually as he enters the next *pāda*), in these words:

> In the first *pāda* of the first chapter it has been stated that in the light of the *sūtra*, "whence the origin etc. of this", (1.1.2) that *Brahman* is the Cause of the world comprehending space/ether, etc. The properties of *Brahman* insofar as it is the Cause of the world, such properties as all-pervasiveness, omniscience, omnipresence and omni-self-hood have been all but explicitly declared. After showing, based on consideration of Cause, that certain words known (ordinarily) to possess other meanings are in fact surrogates for *Brahman*, certain expressions and statements in like manner susceptible to doubt have also been determined as bearing testimony to *Brahman*.[28]

These expressions and statements, according to Śankara's own declaration at the end of the above remark, are examined in the *pādas* 2 and 3, i.e., the 32 *sūtras* of the former and 43 of the latter. The original group of five is now supplemented by a much larger set of concepts and symbols, among which, to select but a few instances, are: "the inner controller" (*antaryāmin*), 1.2.18-20; the invisible (*adṛśya*), 1.2.21-23; "that which is encountered in the form of the universe" (*vaiśvānara*), 1.2.24-32, etc. All these without exception indicate *Brahman* and not *Pradhāna*, nor, for that matter, the individual self (*jīva*), which has been newly offerred hypothetically, as an alternative object of philosophical quest, along with *Pradhāna*.

In the possibility that *jiva* could be thought of as the being to be known, i.e., the object of philosophical quest, the existence of a new loophole has been discovered and it has to be plugged. This line of thought, it is shown, is based primarily on misinterpretation of one of the great passages of the Upaniṣads, i.e., *Chāndogya* 3.14.1 and 2: "All this, verily, is *Brahman*. Let a man meditate calmly on it as *tajjalān* (i.e., that from which everything arises, by

which it is sustained, and to which it returns). Verily man is the essence of his resolution. Just as a man resolves in the world so he becomes. Therefore let him resolve", (*sarvaṁ khalu idaṁ Brahma tajjalān iti śānta upāsīta. atha khalu kratumayaḥ puruṣo. yathā kratur asmin loke bhavati tathātaḥ pretya bhavati. sa kratuṁ kurvīta*). The first several *sūtras* of the second *pāda* are actually devoted to combating the tendency (which probably existed in fact and not only as possibility) to elevate self-knowledge approached in this subjectivist way to the place that rightly belongs to Self-knowledge in the sense of *Brahma-vidyā*.

And it is inordinately strange that such a view should go hand in hand with the view that the knowledge of *Pradhāna* is the true objective of philosophy. Śankara suggests that there are also lesser entities like *Vāyu* (Air), on behalf of which such claims have been put forward, as pointed out in comments on 13.1.

All these misunderstandings had arisen on account of the word *sva* ('own self' in a generic, logico-metaphysical sense). That problem is pointed out in the very first *sūtra* of the third *pāda*: "Because the term 'own self' is used in reference to that which is the abode of heaven, earth, etc., (*dyubhvādi āyatanaṁ svaśabdāt*).

In the course of an acute discussion of the term 'own self', the question is raised whether in the Vedas it is employed in a generic sense, as though it were a purely grammatical formation, a reflexive pronoun used substantively. The answer is given: "no, that is not the case". Śankara writes definitively:

> According to the statement in question, the Supreme *Brahman* is alone fit to be the abode of the world comprising of heaven, earth, *antartkṣa, manas*, and all the life-forces, i.e., the sense-organs woven into its fabric. How is it so? Because of the term 'own self' and because it means what the word *ātman* itself means. The word *ātman* occurs in these passages: "Know the one only Being – the *Ātman*, (*Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, 2.2.5). The word *ātman* can be correctly understood only if we take it to mean the supreme *Ātman* (i.e., *Brahman*) and not something else. In some places in the Vedas *Brahman's* being its (i.e., the world's) abode is expressed by the term 'own self': "All these created things have their roots in Being, have their abode in Being, and have Being as their corner-stone,[29] (*Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, 6.8.4).

The contention clearly is that whatever prior or extraneous meaning we may have in our mind for the term 'own self' it will not serve any purpose in understanding the Vedic use of it unless we learn to derive its meaning from the supreme *Ātman, Brahman,*

Being. Even a most primary word like this, which is formed in the immediacy of our self-consciousness, is restructured by *Vāk*. That is because *Vāk* cuts through the very illusion which makes what is really mediate appear to us as immediacy, that is in our condition of agnosis. This of course calls for our thought, even in respect of our primary words, to be tuned into the amplitude of gnosis.

After considering a series of other words which express the sacred cosmology, at a further point, i.e., at the opening of the last *pāda* of Chapter I, Śankara observes:

> In the wake of the declaration as to the desire for knowledge of *Brahman, Brahman's* identifying sign was stated, i.e., "whence the origin etc., of this". As to the possibility raised (by some) that the identifying sign is equally applicable to *Pradhāna*, that has been set aside on the basis of the *sūtra* which says that the attribution of thinking to *Pradhāna* is not according to *Vāk's* speaking. By the discussion we have just completed it has been shown, in view of the *gatisāmānya* of the Vedic texts, *Brahman* and not *Pradhāna* is the Cause of the world. (But) this is far from established (they say), because in some traditions of Vedic hermeneutics certain other words prevail which seem to suggest that *Pradhāna* is the Being to be known.[30]

These "certain other words" are analysed in the 28 *sutras* of the 4th *pāda* of Chapter 1. The most crucial one is *avyakta* (meaning, the unmanifested). Now, this lead word was appropriated by Sāṁkhya as an explanatory synonym for *Pradhāna*. Śankara shows through a very lengthy analysis (etymological, linguistic and ontological) that this equation had been carried out on the basis of a false assumption and that in fact the word *avyakta* simply means what it says: "the unmanifest". This identification, he argues, has become part of, as well as support for, a faulty metaphysics. He declares at length, "It is not *Pradhāna* that is spoken of as the Being to be known, nor is it what the word *avyakta* indicates."[31]

Now, if *Brahman* continues to be the Being to be known, what is the meaning to be assigned to *avyakta*? The answer comes in Śaṅkara's categorical statement: "*avyakta* is *Avidyā*."[32]

Reconception of Cosmology on the twin basis of Avidyā and the Veda, with the view to the question, "what is to be known?"

Now that in this 4th *pāda* of the First Chapter *Avidyā* has been

introduced in the context of the cosmological inquiry centred on the question as to the Being to be known, we must discuss it in that context, but in doing so we must also bring into view that complementary part of the new basis of cosmology, i.e., the *Veda*, which although introduced in the previous *pāda* had been held in abeyance by us with the intent of taking up the two together, as we are going to do now. [The origin of the world from the *Veda* was first propounded in 1.3.28; and the origin from *Avidyā* is enunciated by Śankara himself (rather than by the *Brahma Sūtra*), first in his comments on 1.4.3. and repeated in other places, particularly under 2.1.14.]

Brahman has already been established as the only Being to be known. And a cosmology has to be developed which will sustain this with unerring clarity. It was sought to be achieved by first providing an "acceptable definition of *avyakta*, i.e., as what denotes the antecedent potential stage of the cosmos at which it is not yet manifested by names and forms", (*jagadidam anabhivyakta-nāma-rūpaṁ prāgavastham avyakta-śabdārham*, 1.4.3.).

At this juncture we may turn to our own statement on the concept of *avidyā* (as agnosis) which we made in the individual, phenomenological sense, earlier on in our present chapter, defining it as being of the nature of mutual superimposition (*adhyāsa*) of self and not-self. Let us reproduce part of our remark: "It is called *avidyā*, or agnosis, because it is that which by positing itself as the very antithesis of *vidyā* (*jñāna*), or gnosis, confronts it and is confronted by it. Indeed, it is by virtue of this confrontation that man discovers himself as the being whose phenomenal essence is the desire for gnosis. The discovery is made possible by the grace of *Vāk*, and thereby agnosis itself is grasped as what is marked for dissipation." From that phenomenological framework of understanding we have, in light of the inquiry into Cause, moved to the cosmological framework. And we have in the meantime been enriched by the governing myth of the Omniscient Creator. Hence now, Śankara discusses *Avidyā* in the cosmological framework (and accordingly we write the word with a capital 'A') and it is in that framework that he argues that the antecedent condition of the world is not some kind of mindless, blind mechanism but something that can only be imputed to a conscious Creator who thinks the world into existence. [It is that same fact which guarantees that *mokṣa, mukti*, is eternal and that the released souls are not thrown back into the *saṁsāric* cycle, a matter about which

Sāṁkhya can say nothing cogent. Therefore, according to Śankara the dependence of this antecedent condition upon the conscious Creator "must be held to be necessarily so", (*sā ca avaśyam abhyupagantavyā*). Also, the potentiating power of the seed (of the cosmos) is of the nature of *Avidyā* and it is indicated by the word *avyakta*, and it has its basis in the highest Lord (the Omniscient Creator) and is of the nature of *Māyā* and is the great slumber in which the *saṁsāric jīvas*, unaware of their own essence, continue to sleep.[33] The famous *Śvetāraśvatara* passage (4.10) is also cited: "Know that the cosmos is *Māyā* and the maker of *Māyā* is the mighty Lord", (*māyām tu prakṛtiṁ vidyāt māyinaṁ tu maheśvaram*). [There has always been much confused thinking in most traditional and contemporary interpretations as to whether *Māyā* and *Avidyā/avidyā* are absolutely synonymous with each other our not. Now with the key we have appropriated it is easy to see that as approached phenomenologically, i.e., as an element in our consciousness, which has been put under the beam of the light coming from gnosis (as we have stated earlier), *avidyā* is not the same as *Māyā*, while as approached cosmologically, *Avidyā* and *Māyā* are the same. The intervening myth of the Omniscient Creator has helped to bring forward the altered connotation. That is the reason why we must move with *Vāk* as it speaks, if we should achieve true hermeneutics.]

Now, the *Avidyā*-basis of the cosmos must be taken in conjunction with its *Veda*-basis. The *sūtra* 1.3.28 says about the cosmos that "it was generated from that" (*ataḥ prabhavaḥ*). Śankara comments: " 'From that' means from the logos of the Veda", (*ata eva hi vaidikāt śabdāt*). [We recall our identification of *Veda* with the IDEA, rather than with the Vedas.] This logos, *Vāk*, it is stated, "is without beginning and end but is eternal" (*anādi-nidhanā nityā*). Then there are names and forms and it is stated that "it is through them that beings and the rites were put into existence", (*nāma-rūpe ca bhūtānām karmāṇām ca pravartanam*). The myth of "the Omniscient Creator, who through the logos of the Veda created (all this) in the beginning", (*vedaśabdebhya eva ādau nirmame sa maheśvaraḥ*), is also brought in.

This myth connects the account of the genesis of the cosmos from the *Veda* with the parallel account of the genesis from *Avidyā*, both through the potential seeds of becoming, known as name and form. In order to perceive this let us move forward to 2.1.14, in the course of the comment upon which Śankara ob-

serves: "The names and forms which are imagined through *Avidyā* and which are, as it were, of the essence of the Omniscient Lord of all, and which are not definable as either identical with or different from Being (i.e. *Brahman*) and are the seeds of the entire cosmos of *saṁsāric* existence are the *Māyā*-power of the Lord".[34]

We see now that cosmology reconceived on the basis of *Avidyā* (or *Māyā*) and the *Veda* (IDEA) has a very clear relation to gnosis in respect of that which is to be known, therefore to be thought, in exactly the way in which cosmology based (as at the start) on the truth that *Brahman* is the Cause has also the same relation to gnosis, i.e., in respect of that which thinks, therefore knows, and that which is to be known, therefore to be thought. We have also learnt that that which thinks, therefore knows, and that which is to be known, therefore to be thought, mark the amplitude, the tuning into which is what must be called thought, i.e., insofar as it has to do with Ultimate Reality.

Earlier on in our present chapter when we introduced "the circle of gnosis philosophy" we spoke of two modes of gnosis, which underlie the possibility of the circle, whereby the conduct of thought accords with the behaviour of gnosis. We spoke of these as the revelatory mode and the realizational mode, the one belonging with showing and the other belonging with seeing. In terms of that distinction it may seem that the amplitude of gnosis is exclusively concerned with the revelatory, or showing, mode. But we will correct that impression by reproducing a statement we made in that earlier context: "The genius of Vedānta, particularly as worked out by Śankara in the *Sūtra Bhaṣya*, is that it establishes the fact that showing and seeing are ultimately one and the same but with the qualification that their convergence is achieved by thought via the project of the gnosis circle." The realizational or seeing mode of gnosis has the same amplitude as we have described above, and thought in relation to that mode too is nothing but tuning into it.

However, the sighting of the convergence of the showing mode and seeing mode of gnosis, into whose amplitude thought is the tuning into, is carried forward, through successive steps of further showing and further seeing, as essential to the unfolding of the system in a formal sense, and to the drawing of the circle of gnosis philosophy in a deeper, spiritual sense. The first entails *avirodha*, which, as we stated at the beginning of this chapter, means removal of the objections based on presumed contradictions in the way the

central theme (i.e., *Brahman*) has been set forth. The second entails *praxis*, or *sādhana*, which also as we stated, is an exhaustive enterprize of refining the ritual, moral and meditative techniques aimed at realizing *Brahman*-gnosis that naturally leads to the fruit, or *phala*, actually a continuation and conclusion of *praxis*.

The Showing mode of Gnosis continued through Reason, and Criticism of other schools' use of Reason

Vedānta appropriates Reason for carrying forward the showing mode of gnosis, in other words, for extending Revelation. In this way, gnosis whose intrinsic means of showing is Revelation (as what is spoken by *Vāk* of its own accord, hence with that literal meaning called *āgama*) becomes also discoursible in the accepted, natural way in which human discourse about Ultimate Reality is conducted, i.e., through reasoning.

But has not Reason an authentic realm of its own, taking into consideration the fact that *Vāk*, logos, is the common ground of Reason and Revelation? Then why should Reason's function be merely carrying forward what Revelation has shown? And do we not also know that *Vāk* is the ground of the structured reality comprehending the cosmos, and therefore it is not possible that it could be approached and re-shaped by the corresponding logos structure of the mind, leading us to ontological Reason (such as has prevailed in the Western tradition from Parmenides down)? In this manner can we not think of a correlation between Reason and Revelation starting from their very depth in the way some Western theologians like Paul Tillich have attempted to do in the Western tradition?

At the first look the answer to all these questions would seem to be affirmative. But when the matter is looked into more deeply, it will be clear that the first appearance is false. For Vedānta speaks of *Vāk* in two ways, i.e., as the ground of all structured reality, including the cosmos, and again as that which communicates gnosis, namely *Vāk* as it speaks. No doubt, as the ground of all structured reality, *Vāk* harbours the potentiality of what could have been philosophically sought out by the mind as ontological Reason, grasping within its embrace the seeking out also, thus generating a *history* of Reason (as in the West). But Vedānta did not turn to this path. Why did it not? But before we ask this ques-

tion, we may ask the prior question "why it or any tradition should necessarily have?" In asking why a particular tradition did not, we assume that the experience of another tradition that actually did so turn, i.e., the Western, is norm. But we soon learn that there is no such thing as norm for great philosophical traditions, that there are only uniquenesses. That from logos as ontological Reason the West initiated and developed a great *history* of Reason, which exploded in a number of directions such as theology, science, ideology and politics, to name but the principal ones, and also continued to occupy the centre stage of the history of philosophy, is undoubtedly part of its uniqueness. No doubt, Reason in this tradition often bursts forth beyond itself, especially breaking into thought's relation to Being and yet without abandoning itself but by only rethinking its ground, often agonizingly.

Vedānta's uniqueness is that it has concentrated on *Vāk* as it communicates gnosis. And hence it turns to Reason as a means for further carrying forward what *Vāk* by itself shows. Accordingly, only in this specific sense is its criticism of other schools' use of Reason to be understood, and no doubt, these schools too had not concerned themselves with ontological Reason nor had they anything that, unlike Vedānta, has even such a potentiality. In brief, in Vedānta's criticism of other schools' use of Reason what is criticized must be understood as *reasoning*, which is a universal factor in all natural thought, seen to be moving in the forefront of all thought that has its ground in human consciousness (as we demonstrated in our Introduction). Understood in this manner, Vedānta through its criticism seeks to lead Reason and its power into the trajectory that moves in the direction of gnosis. All this becomes clear from Śankara's celebrated statement (in 2.1.11) in criticism of other schools' use of Reason, the major part of which, as being relevant to the present discussion, is cited below:

> Reasonings which are not grounded on what has come on its own (*āgama*), i.e., what *Vāk* has spoken (and speaks), and are undertakings based on mere assumptions of persons (who use Reason) are unfounded. As they are mere assumptions they are far from definitive. We see in the world that conjectures labouriously made by adepts (at this way of using Reason) are proven false by greater adepts, and those made by the latter are also in turn disproved by yet others, and therefore it is not possible to believe that these reasonings have a solid foundation and that they are definitive. This is so on account of the variations in human thinking.... (Some people may protest that Reason is self-validating and argue): Its unfoundedness

(on anything but itself) is its beauty, and it is precisely on account of this that flawed (or bad) reasoning is to be rejected and flawless (or good) reasoning to be achieved. (And they add:) There is no philosophical principle (i.e., *pramāṇa*) that encourages a person to remain in an unenlightened state that may have prevailed before. Hence the lack of a ground for Reason (i.e., other than itself) is far from being a defect. (To this we reply:) Let us, for argument's sake, assume that this is correct. Even then there is a certain predicament (arising from the nature of the practicular object to be known), and there is no way out of that. For, although for some objects Reason's self-groundedness may be deemed sufficient, as far as the object to be known, with which we are presently occupied (i.e., Ultimate Reality itself), our contention that this way of using Reason leads us to a predicament from which there is no escape still holds good. It is not possible to make assumptions, unfounded on what has come on its own (i.e., *āgama*) the basis for thinking on the supremely grave question of Being-as-it-is, which, put in other words, is itself the project of freedom (i.e., *mukti-nibandhana*). Being-as-it-is cannot be grasped through its (possible) appearance because it is formless (and hence does not appear), nor can it be deduced from signs (i.e., *lakṣaṇā*) because it has none. And all those who take freedom in its unconditional character understand that gnosis culminates in freedom. That transcendent gnosis is undifferentiated, because it is the disposition of Being itself. (By way of analogy it may be said that) in the empirical world (too) the truth of a cognition depends on all people cognizing an object in an identical way. In that sense it too is transcendent as in the uniformly cognized form of fire (e.g., its hotness). (However, concerning empirical entities which do not appear but can be deduced only from signs,) mutual differences among men are a scandal. It is all too well known in the world that a position taken by one disputant is controverted by another and the latter's position in turn by a third. How then can such unsettled knowledge take the place of gnosis?[35]

In this criticism Śankara is taking Reason, that is, strictly in the way in which it is understood in the present frame of discourse, to the limits of its possibility in order to argue out what it can do and what it cannot do. Its authority in establishing clear-cut knowledge of empirical appearances, by following their own signs, is acknowledged. However, this is so only in principle, for in actual fact the disagreement among thinkers even with respect to uniformly available empirical cognitions is a scandal. But it is also pointed out that that authority cannot be extended to knowledge of Ultimate Reality as there is no appearance of it which is to be known, and there are no lead signs. The only thing that appears, or presents itself, is that which has come of its own accord (i.e. *āgama*), in other words what *Vāk* has spoken. That, then, is the *pratyakṣa* in this respect. No doubt, that has its lead signs too. It

would be a misuse of Reason to by-pass this thing which appears and to speculate on the nature of Ultimate Reality by inauthentically extending Reason's authority, although for the most part only theoretical and seldom realized, into the realm of the Ultimate. By the same token, it has its proper use, which is to carry forward the showing mode of gnosis, and that consists in *Vāk's* own speaking. This way we are led to the conclusion of Śankara's statement:

> Hence it is established that knowledge of Ultimate Reality is brought by the Upaniṣads. Inasmuch as there is no such knowledge outside this there is a predicament that faces the Reason that seeks ultimate freedom without it. Therefore, on the ground of what has come of its own accord and carried forward by Reason as it follows its own deductive path, it is now confirmed that the conscious *Brahman* is the Cause of the world and of Nature itself.[36]

We have just completed outlining the showing mode of gnosis, terminating in the way Reason is used for it. It is important while noticing the depth of Śankara's discussion of Reason, that we should perceive that it is not aimed at leading Reason to its source in *Vāk* (logos), the structure of all reality and of speaking itself but at *Vāk's* specific speaking by which gnosis shows itself. The desire for freedom (*mumukṣatva*) which is the same as the desire for knowledge of Ultimate Reality (*brahma-jijñāsā*) is, however, its sign present in human consciousness. This sign is what makes that which comes of its own accord (i.e., *āgama*, or the Vedas) an appearance, a presence, or *pratyakṣa*, which in turn addresses that which carries the sign, i.e., human consciousness, the sign itself revealing consciousness's inherent structural orientation. It is because of this that gnosis serves as the ground of thought.

[Śankara's criticism continues, and passing to other schools from that paradigmatic non-Vedāntic school, i.e., Sāṁkhya, in relation to which the essentials of gnosis and philosophical thought in Vedānta, predicated primarily on the Cause question, have been set forth. The criticism, however, is carried on through the rest of the second chapter, beginning at 2.1.12, covering all other important schools such as Vaiśeṣika atomism, Buddist aggregationism, "nihilism" and mentalism, Jaina pluralistic pan-psychism, and Bhāgavata creationism. However, as the criticisms of these schools, albeit important in other respects, have no immediate bearing on the question of gnosis and philosophical thought in the way we

have set up for investigation we shall not touch upon them in this work.]

The Seeing, or Realizational, mode of Gnosis, the New use of Cosmology, and the Return of the Rite

We stated early in this present chapter of ours that the two modes of gnosis, i.e., the revelational (showing) and the realizational (seeing) are as much the essence of the way gnosis itself behaves as of the way thought conducts itself, and we added that this can be said only in the light of the accord between the way of the one and the way of the other having a philosophical reality, that is, in other words, in the light of thought finding itself as extension of gnosis. We also spoke about how both these modes of gnosis and their extensions as thought are integral to the gnosis circle. Having discussed the one, let us now turn to the other, i.e., the realizational, which is the subject-matter of the last two chapters of the *Brahma Sūtra* and its *Bhāṣya*, entitled *Sādhana* (*praxis*) and its *Phala* (fruit).

The third Chapter, *Sādhana*, as Śankara states at the beginning of his comment on it, deals primarily with certain *vidyās*, the word *vidyā* (also from *vid*, to know), having the meaning of practical "knowing-how", hence very similar to the original meaning of the Greek *epistēmē*. A *vidvān*, therefore, in the oldest sense of the word is an *epistamenos*, "one who knows how", again, as in the Greek tradition.[37]

It is made clear repeatedly that *vidyā* in the sense of *praxis* has nothing but what it itself is in the theoretical sense to draw from. And there is no interval at all between the *theōrea* and the *praxis*. Hence, *vidyā* is its own *praxis*, which entails the "know-how". However, one noteworthy feature of it is the re-introduction of cosmology, no doubt *Avidyā*-based cosmology, for the particular conduct of thought that is entailed in *praxis*, i.e., what is called *upāsana*, or concrete meditation. In this respect thought involves the use of tools (*upakaraṇa*) such as *prāṇa* (life-breath) and other cosmological entities formed as means. This matter Śankara discusses at the very opening of the third chapter. "It follows", he states, that, as has already been said, "certain tools (of thought) for the human being, which are different from his self, also spring from *Brahman*", 3.1.1.[38] The use of these tools for *upāsana*

(meditation) constitutes the main feature of the "know-how" of *Brahma-vidyā*. In fact the bulk of the third and fourth chapters is an elaborate discussion of this theme. That the apparent differences in the tools do not imply any differences among the *vidyās* (insofar as they are all expressions of the same *Brahma-vidyā*) is dealt with in *pāda* 3 of the third chapter, beginning with the first *sūtra*: "In view of the declaration in the entire body of the Upaniṣads (i.e., pertaining to *Brahma-vidyā*) all *vidyās* are identical", (*sarva-vedānta-pratyayam codanādi aviśeṣāt*).

Cosmology provides the tools for meditation, but because the cosmology is *Avidyā*-based the thinker can use the tools without fear, provided he knows it to be so, and this is the essence of the Vedāntic "know-how". For indeed, with the rising of gnosis, *Avidyā* will be dissipated. Hence, Śankara states in 3.2.21:

> Inasmuch as it is said that the cosmos superimposed on the one only Being, i.e., *Brahman*, through *Avidyā* is to be dissipated by means of gnosis, it would be sufficient for one (i.e., the thinker) to be made to know: "*Brahman* is one only without a second" (*Chāndogya* 6.2.1); "That is the Truth, That is the *Ātman*, That thou art" (*Chāndogya* 6.8.7-16). Then gnosis (i.e., in the seeing mode) will spring up of itself and counterpose itself against *Avidyā*.[39]

In thought conducting itself in accordance with gnosis in its realizational or seeing mode, what has been held in abeyance at the beginning of the epic of gnosis, i.e., the rite, returns, not, however, as an epic of its own and certainly not as a humanistic epic as in Purva-Mīmāṁsā. This is the same as saying that thought, or thinking, itself enters the sphere of the rite, which entails the doing of something but no longer as a means to an end.

But why the doing, why the rite? If thought is to be a doing, is to be an entry into the sphere of the rite, is not its accord with gnosis likely to be broken, because gnosis has been consistently defined as "not a humanistic project", (*na hi tat puruṣa-tantram*), but a "project of the thing (Being) itself", (*vastu tantram-eva hi tat*).[40] The answer lies in regrasping the whole sphere of the rite anew, under gnosis, one in which meditational "action" dominates. However, meditational action takes us to the last step in the epic of gnosis.

All the traditional rites such as "the rites proper to a person's station beginning with the lighting of the sacred life", (*agnīndhānādi-āśrama-karmāṇi*), 3.4.25, are now appropriated as *vidyās*.

These rites, it is maintained, based on 3.4.33, are "cooperators" (*sahakārī*) in the attainment of the fruit. Now fruit, or *phala*, is a theme of the utmost importance for Vedānta, and the fruit is freedom (*mokṣa, mukti, nirvāṇa*) itself. For the gnosis circle must be consistent with the definition of the subject, i.e., man, as being-unto-freedom, and such consistency of thought's conduct stands as a witness to the absoluteness of gnosis. Under gnosis the rites are oriented to the one fruit, i.e., freedom.

Thought, inasmuch as it is the attunement with the amplitude of gnosis and inasmuch as gnosis is not an epiphenomenon of the rite, has in itself an orientation to the concrete fruit. Only in such orientation is the attunement with the amplitude of gnosis possible, for here all that is vague, merely metaphorical and abstract is eschewed.

Once again, why the rite? In fact, Vedānta does not actually give a reason. It simply grasps what is already there, in the particular manner in which it exists in a particular tradition and outlines a new use for it. On the other hand, while declining to give a reason for the existence of the rite, it gives a number of explanations of its use. Among them is the fact that they, the daily, natural religious performances, or *nityakarmas*, are helpful for the soul's self-purification and that they are cooperators in the project of *mokṣa*. Many are the statements where "the rites are described as being able to consume impurities of the soul because gnosis is the highest goal."[41] Often, it is also argued that recommendations to perform rites are spill-overs of the praise (*stuti*) of gnosis – and in this way a new "place" for them is found.[42]

On the whole, we see that gnosis says "no" to the rite in terms argued for by Pūrva Mīmāṁsā, and yet says "yes" in terms of itself, but always subordinate to the acquisition of certain interior wealths of the meditator such as calmness, and most of all the desire for freedom (*mumukṣatva*),[43] the last of which is considered the highest wealth. The performance of the rite is treated as a spontaneous aspect of the way one who resolutely observes gnosis and is resolutely on the way to freedom comports himself. It is not something to be observed for any merit of its own. The text naturally ends with a declaration of the certainty of eternal freedom for one who resolutely observes gnosis, a freedom that is the accepted goal of all spiritual investigation and striving, whose finality and ultimacy are also unequivocally stressed. That is how the text ends.

A Concluding Supplementary Remark

The subject-matter of our investigation has been gnosis and the question of thought. In this just completed chapter of ours we have investigated it with the help of the *Brahma-Sūtra* and its *Bhāṣya*. The text itself has said much about gnosis by its own flow, or *gati*. And in this very flow we have had to find gnosis as the ground of thought as well. We have been summoned not only to understand what the text apparently says but to question it so that it speaks again in the very amplitude of gnosis, which we have learned cannot be tuned into in any other form than as thought. It is true, however, that we have certainly not been left in any doubt that as the text comes to a close its clearly directed appeal is to ultimate spiritual freedom. Could it be otherwise? Certainly not, in view of the absolute integrity and finality of the system. Ultimate Reality, gnosis, freedom – these three have a certain relation to one another, which cannot be anything short of identity. The system itself unfolds merely so that this identity may be revealed – as gnosis, of course – and also so that all of our thinking as well as striving, i.e., all that has had its origin, broadly speaking, in consciousness, may be brought into its orbit, thereby facilitating our realizing this identity of the Real, gnosis and freedom.

Such, no doubt, is the ordinance of gnosis. However, the fact that philosophy, while placing itself within this ordinance, also heeds the call of thought, which when followed down to its ground is perceived as nothing else but gnosis, is the reason why it unavoidably hears another clearly directed appeal of gnosis, which relates to thought itself directly. It is no doubt the case that the ability to heed this call of thought (albeit, according to Vedānta, having its ground in gnosis), and set out in the direction from which the call keeps coming, is what makes philosophy philosophy. All philosophies are together in this. It is also unavoidable that in investigating the source of the call philosophy reaches a ground beyond the realms where thought is recognized as thought, which is a new, self-manifesting ground. [We described in our Introduction three different grounds, i.e., consciousness, the correspondence of being to Being and gnosis.]

But, that thought proceeds from gnosis is also a new fact. As such, it investigates gnosis and questions it. The questioning of its own ground is the questioning of all things, and it must go on without ceasing and yet without anticipating a realized knowledge

weighing heavily upon the questioning. When we concentrate on freedom as that to which gnosis moves, it might seem that questioning is far from the way of Vedānta, other than in the technical sense as steps towards ultimate certainty of saving knowledge. That is why we must return again and again to the questioning mode of *Brahman*-gnosis that we have spoken about. In other words, we are here talking about gnosis itself as the ground of questioning in that it is the ground of thought. And questioning is not in the technical sense of working one's way towards anticipated certainty of saving knowledge. On the contrary, we are here considering the full implication of gnosis as the ground of thought, which already comprehends the certainty that technical reasoning merely searches for. It is this ground which must hold that inexchangeable essense of philosophy that we call questioning. In other words it becomes the house of all questions (and of all *scepsis*). Philosophy, therefore, is more fully understood in this way as the habitation of the attunement with the amplitude of gnosis. It furnishes the scope for our being questioningly involved in the realization of knowledge and at the same to be involved in the questioning, no longer with the certainty of knowledge as a deadweight, but with gnosis itself as a freeing agent. This is how the known is to be known, this is how the Real is realized. This is how the question "why" along with the "why" of the "why" will continue, and the circle of gnosis philosophy, instead of remaining a closed circle, will become open again in order to be carried further forward, and yet in a new way that will hold, contain and ground the anguish as well as the darkness of questioning.

Our remark that the circle of gnosis philosophy, instead of remaining a closed circle, will become open again in order to be carried further forward can be illustrated by the very transitional character of the great essay on Cause with its principal interest in a sacred cosmology essentially designed to give man a firm place from which to conduct thought in response to gnosis. Even in that essay the circle keeps on opening itself to emerging, deeper possibilities of thought in response to more arresting appearances of gnosis which brought forward the definition of gnosis as the amplitude between the two poles of Being (the one that thinks, therefore knows, and the one that is known, therefore thought), and of thought as the attunement with that amplitude.

The essay on Cause, which served as the framework for debates with Sāṁkhya and other traditional Indian systems come to a

point of bounding over itself. By tracing the development of the essay to that point where that framework itself was transcended, the challenge was how to seize what could ensue therefrom as the opening again of the gnosis circle for continued conduct of thought, albeit in deepest accord with the way gnosis itself behaves.

Here it has become insistently clear that coming into the ambience of that Western tradition which is characterized by the gravity and single-mindedness with which it has asked the question of thought, under Being, is not only unavoidable but is immensely needful and useful. By attending to that tradition, gnosis philosophy is enabled to question itself about thought even in the very act of approaching it from the ground of gnosis, and to develop an unprecedented perspective on the possibility of thought coming to pass in the appearing of gnosis. In that way it also no longer needs to remain a mute outsider to the tradition that pursues the question of thought as the central question of philosophy.

Finally, it must have become amply clear why our present work has had to go about its business by means of a dialogue with the very foundations of the Indian gnosis philosophy. No study of any later work would lead to the same possibilities. By the same token, once the tradition has been seized at the source subsequent developments will also find their place in the stream, within critical limits.

NOTES AND ADDITIONAL REFERENCES

1 – TO INTRODUCTION

1. *Note*: For instance, speaking of Western-European philosophy, Heidegger states parenthetically "and there is no other, neither a Chinese nor an Indian philosophy", *What is Called Thinking?*, Translation (of *Was Heisst Denken?*) by J. Glenn Gray, New York, Harper & Row, 1968, p. 224.
2. Martin Heidegger, *What is Philosophy?* translation (of *Was ist das – die philosophie?*) by W. Kluback and J.T. Wilde, New York, Twayne Publishers, 1958, pp. 29-(30)-31.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 21.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 67.
5. *Loc. cit.*
6. Cf. the excellent analysis of "The Concept of Phenomenon" in Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, translated by J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson, New York, Harper & Row, 1962, p. 51, (*Sein and Zeit* No. 29).
7. *mala gar philosophou touto to pathos, to thaumazein. ou gar allē archē philosophias ē autē. Theatetus*, 155d-.
8. *dia gar to thaumazein hoi anthrōpoi kai nun kai to prōton ērxanto. Metzphysics*, A2, 982 b. 12.
9. *What is Philosophy?*, pp. 82-83.
10. *Ideas*, translated by W.R. Boyce Gibson, New York, Collier Books, 1962, (23A) p. 82.
11. *yato vāco nivartante aprāpya manasā saha, Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, 2.4.1.
12. Italics ours.
13. *What is Philosophy?*, p. 27.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 33.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 69.
16. *Loc. cit.*
17. *Ibid.*, p. 71.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 73.
19. *Ibid.*, pp. 73 [74]-75.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 77.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 79.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 79.
23. *Loc. cit.* Schon die griechischen Denker, Platon und Aristoteles, haben darauf aufmerksam gemacht, dass die philosophie und das Philosophieren in die Dimension des Menschen gehören, die wird die Stimmung (in Sinne der Ge-stimmtheit und die Be-stimmtheit) nennen, p. 78.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 85. Das Erstaunen ist die Stimmung, innerhalb derer den griechischen Philosophen das Entsprechen zum Sein des Seienden gewährt war, p. 84.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 49.

26. *Loc. cit.*
27. *Loc. cit.*
28. Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 57.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 61.
30. Heidegger, *Was ist Metaphysik?* (8th Edition) Nachwort, p. 43.
31. *Essays in Metaphysics*: Identity and Difference, translation (of *Identität und Differenz*) by Kurt F. Leidecker, New York, Philosophical Library, 1960, p. 58. Cf., *Identität und Differenz*, p. 64.
32. "Plato and Heidegger", *The Question of Being*: East and West Perspectives, edited by Mervyn Sprung, University Park and London, Pennsylvania State University Press, 1978, p. 53.
33. *Commentary on Māṇḍūkya-kārikā*, 4.1.

2 – TO CHAPTER I: THE *ṚG VEDA*

1. *What is called Thinking?*, p. 178.
2. *Dhātukośa*, M.R. Kale, *A Higher Sanskrit Grammar* (1894), reprint, Delhi, etc., Motilal Banarsidass, 1967, p. 124.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 205.
4. *ata eva ca nityatvākṛter-devāter-jagato vedaśabda-prabhāvatvāt vedaśabda-nityatvam api pratyetavyam, Brahma-Sūtra-Bhāṣya*, 1.3.29.
5. *yajñena vācaḥ pradavīyam āyan.*
6. Cf. translation by H.H. Wilson, reprinted, Calcutta, Punthi Pusthak, 1961, pp. 221-2, (*Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, 3.4.1).
7. See *The System of the Vedanta*, p. 51.
8. A.Y.P.S., 1.33. Cf. Jaimini, *Mīmāmsā-Sūtra, taccodakeṣu mantrākhyā śeṣe brāhmaṇaśabda.*
9. *Note*: The number 10473 for *ṛks* is based on the authority of Erkara Raman Nambūdri, the greatest living scholar of the Vedas. See his *Āmnāyamadhanam*, Tanavūr, Malappuram Jilla, Kerala, India, Anadi Books, 1976, p. 36.
10. See Sāyaṇa's introduction to his *Ṛagbhāṣya.*
11. *What is Called Thinking?*, pp. 232-233. *Note*: The idea of long preparation that Heidegger speaks about is very well known to Yoga. Thus the *Yoga Sūtra* (1.14) speaks of preparatory exercise (*abhyāsa*) for a long time (*dīrgha-kāla*) and regularly undertaken (*nairantarya*) as a pre-condition for intuition.
12. The introduction to the *Ṛgbhāṣya*: *tatko vā ṛṣi iti vicāraṇayā ṛṣati mantrān paśyati tapasā iti ṛṣi iti. vyutpatyā mantradraṣṭureva taccabdena grahaṇam. ata eva ṛṣayo mantra draṣṭāraḥ sāmpradayikī prasiddhiḥ.*
13. See Yāska, *Nirukta*, beginning of Ch. 7.
14. 1.41.6
15. 7.32.13.
16. 1.40.5.
17. 7.7.6.

18. 10.134.7
19. *What is Called Thinking?*, pp. 138-9.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 140.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 141.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 143.
23. 10.88.14.
24. *What is Called Thinking?*, p. 117.
25. *Śakti and Śakti*, Madras, Ganesh, 6th ed., 1965, p. 484.
26. See Arthur Avalon (Sir John Woodroffe), *Principles of Tantra*, Madras, Ganesh and Co., 3rd ed., 1960, pp. 494-5.
27. *What is Called Thinking?*, p. 10.
28. *Amarakośa, pradhamakāṇḍa, śabdādivarga.*
29. *What is Called Thinking?*, p. 10.
30. 10.67.3.
31. 9.26.2.
32. 10.67.4.
33. See *Āmnāyamadhanam*, p. 128.
34. This same idea is exactly expressed by Bhavabhūti in *Uttararāma-caritam* thus:
    āvirbhūta-jyotiṣām brāhmaṇānām ye vyavahārasteṣu mā samśayābhūt bhadrā hi eṣāṁ vāci lakṣmir niṣannā naite vācaṁ viplutārthaṁ vadanti.

3 – TO CHAPTER II: THE UPANIṢADS

1. The *Commentary on the Kena Upaniṣad*, 4.7. *upaniṣad, tādātmya-lakṣaṇena sāmīpyena nitarāṁ brahma gamayitvā ahaṁ mām iti granthīn śithilī kṛtya avidyāṁ samskāraṁ sādayati vināśyati iti upaniṣad brahma-vidyā.*
2. *upanisaditi vidyocyate. tacchīlānāṁ garbhajanmajarādi niśādanāt tada-vasādanāt vā brahmaṇo vā upanigamayitṛtvād upaniṣaṇṇaṁ vā asyāṁ paraṁ śreya iti*, Sureśvara in the introduction (*Saṁbandhavārtika*) to his famous sub-commentary on Śankara's *Commentary on the Bṛhadārany-aka Upaniṣad*. Sureśvara follows up this definition elaborately, beginning with the statement: "Here the word *upaniṣad* has the meaning of the transcendent *Brahman*-knowledge", (*atra copaniṣad śabdo brahma-vidyaikagocaraḥ*), stanzas 3-8.
3. *Loc. cit.*
4. For example, see Introduction to the *Commentary on the Kaṭha Upaniṣad*.
5. See *Chāndogya*, 3.11.5; *Bṛhadāranyaka*, 6.3.12; *Śvetāśvatara*, 6.22; *Muṇḍaka*, 3.2.11; *Maitrī*, 6.29. *Note*: The problem of the qualification or eligibility (*adhikāra*) to learn the Upaniṣads develops out of this. Essentially, it is the character of the knowledge that automatically excludes those who are not qualified. See *Sureśvara*, Supra, Stanza 12.
6. *Kena*, 4.6.7.

7. The expression is composed of four parts, *tad, ja, ti, an,* meaning *that* from which all things *originate*, to which they *return* and in which they *subsist*.
8. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, 2.4.5.
9. *Chāndogya*, 7.1.2, 3.
10. *brahma stomaṁ ghṛtamadass akran, Ṛg Veda*, 2.39.81.
11. *brahma stomaṁ maghavā somaṁ ukthā bibrateti, Ibid.*, 4.22.1.
12. *Ibid.*, 6.45.7.
13. *Ibid.*, 10. 141.3.
14. *Six Systems of Indian Philosophy*, pp. 68 ff.
15. *Geschichte der Philosophie*, I, pp. 240 ff.
16. *Religion and Philosophy of the Vedas and the Upaniṣads.*
17. *Philosophies of India*, pp. 77-8.
18. *yajñakarma-codanāt brāhmaṇam.*
19. *Religion and Philosophy of the Vedas and the Upaniṣads.*
20. *Ibid.*, p. 454. *Note*: One cannot agree with Keith, however, that in the Brāhmaṇas sacrifice is magic pure and simple (*loc.cit.*), while he himself writes: "... taken as a whole it is impossible to deny the name philosophy to an ordered view of the universe [that is in the Brāmaṇas] fully thoughtout, and within its fundamental limitations, logical and complete", (*Ibid.*, p. 455). How could magic be credited with such things?
21. *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, 8.4.1.3, here taken from translation of Julius Eggeling.
22. *Ibid.*, 11.2.3.6. Cf., *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*, 2.1.1.
23. *Ibid.*, 10.3.5.11, 12.
24. Cf. *Tāṇḍya Brāhmaṇa*, 8.8.8-10. *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*, 1.19.1, *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, 11.2.3, etc.
25. 10.6.3.1.
26. *Geschichte der Philosophie*, I.2.84 ff.
27. Cf. 7.8.2; 1.37.7; 10.92.13; 10.168.4.
28. 10.168.4.
29. *sūrya ātmā jagataḥ tasthuṣaśca*, 1.115.1.
30. *ātmā yajñasya*, 9.6.8.
31. *ātmā yañjasya pūrvyaḥ*, 9.2.10.
32. 10.163.5, 6.
33. 4.2.3.1; 9.2.1.2.
34. 4.2.3.1.
35. 11.2.1.2.
36. 3.8.3.8.
37. 10.3.5.13.
38. 10.6.3.2. (J. Eggeling's translation, adapted to make the distinction between *Ātman* and *ātman*.)
39. *Commentary on Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, 6.8.7: *ātma śabdasya nirupapadasya pratyagātmani gavādi śabdavat nirūḍhatvāt.*
40. *The Philosophy of the Upaniṣads*, p. 39.
41. *Commentary on Brahma Sūtra*, 2.1.14. *sa ātmā tat tvam asi, śvetaketo, iti ca śārīrasya brahmabhāvopadeśāt, svayaṁ prasiddhaṁ hi etat śārīrasya brahmātmatvam upadiśyate, na yatnāntaraprasādhyam. ataśca idaṁ*

brahmātmatvam abhyupagamyamānaṁ svābhāvikaṁ śārīrātmatvasya bādhakaṁ sampadyate, rajjvādibuddhaya iva sarpādibuddhīnām.

42. *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, 1.2.23; *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, 3.2.3.
43. *ataśca na bhinnākāra-yogo brahmaṇa śāstrīya iti śakyate vaktum. bhedasya upāsana arthatvāt abhede tātparyāt, Commentary on Brahma Sūtra*, 3.2.12.
44. *athāta ādeśaḥ neti neti, na hi etasmād iti, neti anyat param iti. atha nāmadheyaṁ satyasya satyam iti.*
45. *nanu kathamābhyāṁ neti neti nirdeśābhyāṁ satyasya satyaṁ nirdikṣitamiti ucyate-sarvopādhi-viseṣāpohena yasmin na kaścit viśeṣo'sti nāma vā rūpaṁ vā karma vā bhedo vā jātirvā guṇo vā taddvāreṇa hi śabdapravṛtti bhavati. na caiṣām kaścidviśeṣo brahmaṇyasti. ato na nirdeṣṭum śakyata idaṁ tad iti. gaurasau spandate śuklo viṣaṇi iti yathā loke nirdiśyate tathā. adhyāropa nāma-rūpa karma-dvāreṇa brahma nirdeśyate vijñānamanāndaṁ brahma vijñānaghana eva brahma ātmā iti evamādiśabdaiḥ. yadā punaḥ svarūpameva nirdideksitaṁ bhavati nirastasarvopādhiviśeṣam tadā na kenacidapi prakāreṇa nirdeṣṭum. tada'yam eva asti upāya yaduta prāptinirdeśa pratiṣedhadvāreṇa neti neti nirdeśaḥ, Commentary on Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, 2.3.6.
46. *etena sadākhyenā'tmanā'tmatvāt sarvam idam jagat*, Comment on 6.8.7.
47. *sad eva idam agra āsīt evam evadvitīyam, tadd haika āhuḥ, asad evedam agra āsīd ekam evādvitīyam tasmāt asataḥ sad jāyata kutas-tu khalu, saumya evaṁ syāt, iti hovāca, katham asataḥ sajjāyeti, sat tu eva, idam agra āsīt ekam evādvitīyam.*
48. *Commentary on Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, 1.1: *brahma-vidyāyām upaniṣadcchabda-prayoga-darśanāt upaniṣad-cchabdena brahma-vidyocyate.*
49. *svaṁ praśnaṁ nyāya-prakāram atītya āgamena praṣṭavyāṁ devatāṁ anumanena mā prākṣīḥ, Commentary on Bṛhādaraṇyāka Upaniṣad*, 3.6.1.
50. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, 2.4.14; *yatra hi dvaitam iva bhavati, tad itara itaraṁ jighrati, tad itara itaraṁ paśyati, tad itara itaraṁ śṛṇoti, tad itara itaram abhivadati, tad itara itaraṁ manute, tad itara itaraṁ vijānāti. yatra tu asya sarvam ātmaivabhūt, tat kena kaṁ jighret, tat kena kaṁ paśyāt, tat kena kaṁ śṛṇuyāt, tat kena kam abhivadet, tat kena kaṁ manvīta, tat kena kaṁ vijānīyāt? yenedam sarvaṁ vijānāti, taṁ kena vijānīyāt, vijñātāram are kena vijānīyat?*
51. This simile is very reminiscent of Plato. See *Phaedo*, 24-28; *Phaedrus*, 246f; *Republic*, IV, 433. Further, inspite of differences, *nous* in Plato seems to be identical in what it does, with *vijñāna* of the *Upaniṣads*.
52. *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, 2.5.1.
53. *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad*, 13: *nānta prajñam, na bahiṣprajñam, nobhayataḥ prajñam, na prajñāna-ghanam, na prajñam, nāprajñam, adṛṣtam, avyavahāryam, agrāhyam, alaksaṇam, acintyam, avyapradeśyam, ekātmapratyaya-sāram, prapañcopaśamam, śāntaṁ, śivam, advaitam, caturtham manyate, sa ātmā sa vijñeyaḥ.*

4 – TO CHAPTER III: THE *BHAGAVADGĪTĀ*

1. *tadidam gītāśāstraṁ samastha-vedārtha sārasaṃgraha-bhūtam.*
2. *tadartha-āviṣkaraṇāya-anekair-vivṛta-pada-padārtha-vākyārtha-nyāyam-api-atyanta-viruddhān-ekārthatvena laukikair-labhyamāṇam-upalabhya-aham vivekato'rtha-nirdhāraṇārthaṁ saṁkṣepato vivaraṇaṁ kariṣyāmi.*
3. *dve akṣare brahma-pare tu anante vidyāvidye nihite yatra gūḍhe; kṣaraṁ tu avidyā hy amṛtaṁ tu vidyā vidyāvidye īṣate yas tu so'nyaḥ.*
4. See *Gītārahasya* (E.T.), pp. 30-36.
5. *Essays on the Gītā*, p. 73.
6. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Bhagavadgītā*, pp. 13-14.
7. *Op. cit.*, p. 12.
8. R.C. Zaehner, *The Bhagavadgītā*, p. 1.
9. *Op. cit.*, p. 2.
10. *Op. cit.*
11. *Op. cit.*
12. *sarvopaniṣado gāvo dogdhā gopālanandanaḥ pārtho vatsaḥ sudhir bhoktā dugdhaṁ gītāmṛtaṁ mahat.*
13. *Gītā*, 1.45.
14. *Ibid.*, 2.7.
15. F. Nietzsche, On the *Geneology of Morals*, trans., W. Kaufman, pp. 36-7. *Note*: Nietzsche and the *Bhagavadgītā* seem to say the same thing, from opposite standpoints, leading to opposite conclusions. Yet the fact that there is a common ground is noteworthy.
16. *"tatkāraṇaṁ sāṁkhyayogādhigamyam" iti vaidikam eva. tatra jñānaṁ dhyānaṁ ca sāṁkhyayogaśabdābhyām abhilapyate. pratyāsatter iti avagantavyam. yena tu aṁśena na virudhyate tena iṣṭameva sāṁkhyayoga-smṛtyoḥ sāvakāśatvam.*
17. *ātmano dehādi-vyatiriktasya kartṛtva bhoktṛtvādi-apekṣo dharmādharma viveko-pūrvika mokṣa-sādhana-anuṣṭhāna-lakṣaṇo yogaḥ, Commentary on Gītā*, 2.10.
18. *yata evam yoga-viṣayām buddhau tat paripāka-jāyāṁ vā sāṁkhya buddhau śaraṇam-āśraya-prāpti-kāraṇam-anviccha prārthayasva paramārtha-jñāna-śaraṇe bhavet-ityarthaḥ.*
19. *yā ca karmajā siddhiruktā jñāna-niṣṭhā-yogyatā lakṣanā.*
20. Comment on *Gītā*, 6.4.
21. "The source of desire is imagination, and sacrifices are of the form of desire", *saṁkalpa mūlaḥ kāmo vai yajñāḥ saṁkalpabhāvāḥ, Manusmṛti*, 2.2. "O desire I know thy root, thou art born of imagination", *kāmā jāṇāmi te mūlam saṁkalpāt-kila jāyase, Mahābhārata, Śāntiparva*, 177.25.
22. *ata ātma-samavetatayā sarva-loka-prasiddhe karmaṇi nadīkūlastheṣviva vṛkṣeṣu gati-prātilomyena akarma karma-bhāvaṁ yathābhūtaṁ gatyabhāvamiva vṛkṣeṣu yaḥ paśyet, akarmaṇi ca kārya-kāraṇa-vyapāro parame karmavadāt-manyadhyāropite tūṣṇīm-akurvan-sukhamāse-ityahaṁkārābhisaṁdhi-hetutvāt tasminakarmaṇi ca karma ya paśyet,* Śankara, *Commentary on Gītā*, 4.18.
23. Comment on 9.5.

24. Comment on 11.54.
25. *matparama karoti bhṛtyaḥ svāmi-karma na tu ātmanaḥ paramā pretya gatiriti svāminaṁ pratipadyate, ayaṁ tu matkarmakṛtmām eva paramāṁ gatim pratipadyate iti matparamaḥ.*
26. *evaṁ ca sati sarva-kṣetreṣvapi sato bhagavataḥ kṣetrajñasya īśvarasya saṁsāritva-gandhamātram api nāśakyam*, Comment on 13.2.
27. *sarvam utpādamānaṁ kṣetra-kṣetrajña-saṁyogādutpadyate ityuktam*, Introductory comment on chapter 14.
28. *guṇasamkhyāne kāpile śāstre tadāpi guṇasaṁkhyānaṁ śāstraṁ guṇabhoktṛviṣaye pramāṇameva.*
29. See J.G. Arapura, "The Upside-down Tree of the *Bhagavadgītā*", *Numen*, vol. XXII, Fasc. 2.
30. *sarvo hi gītāśāstrartho'sminnadhyāye samāsenoktaḥ, na kevalam gītāśāstra eva, kiṁ tu sarvaśca vedārtha iha parisamāptaḥ.*
31. In the Comment on 16.1.
32. In the Comment on 16.2
33. *jñānasya svātmotppatti-parapāka-hetu-yuktasya pratipakṣa-vihīnasya yadātmānubhava-niścayāvasānatvaṁ tasya niṣṭhāśabdābhilāpāt śāstrācāryopadeśena jñānotpatti-paripākahetuṁ sahakāri-kāraṇam buddhi-viśudhyādi-amānitvādi cāpekṣya janitasya kṣetrajña-paramātmaika-jñānasya kartṛtvādi-kāraka-bheda-buddhi nibandhana-sarva-karma-saṁnyāsya-sahitasya svātmānubhava-niścaya-rūpeṇa yadavasthānaṁ sā parā jñāna-niṣṭheti-ucyate.*
34. *buddher-ātma-sama-nairmalyādyupapatter-ātma-caitanya ākārābhāsatvopapttiḥ*, in Comment on 18.50.

5 – TO CHAPTER IV: THE *BRAHMA SŪTRA*

1. "Because of the stringing together of the passages of the Upaniṣads like flowers, therefore it is called *sūtra*" (*vedānta-vākya kusuma granthānarthatvāt sūtrāṇām*), Śankara's *Bhāṣya on the Brahma Sūtra*, 1.1.2. [Hereafter this text will be referred to as just the *Sūtra Bhāṣya* or *Bhāṣya.*]
2. *The System of the Vedānta*, (English translation), p. 27.
3. *Op. cit.*, p. 4.
4. For instance *Bhāṣya*, 1.3.28 says "*pratyakṣa* is *śruti.*"
5. Deussen, *op. cit.*, p. 4.
6. *Bhāṣya*, opening sentences: *yuṣmadasmat-pratyayagocarayor-viṣaya-viṣayinos-tamaḥ-prakāśavad-viruddha-svabhāvayor-itaretara-bhāvanupapattau siddhāyām-taddharmāṇām-api sutarāmitaretara-bhāvānupapattiḥ. ityato'smatpratyayagocare viṣayiṇi cidātmake yuṣmatpratyayagocarasya viṣayasya taddharmāṇāṁ cādhyāsaḥ, tadviparyayeṇa viṣayiṇastaddharmāṇām ca viṣaye'dhyāso mithyeti bhavituṁ yuktam. tathāpi anyonyasminn-anyonyātmakām anyonya-dharmāṁśca-adhyasyetaretarāvivekena. atyantaviviktayor-dharma-dharmiṇor-mithyājñāna-nimittaḥ satyānṛte*

mithunīkṛtya, ahamidam, māmedamiti naisargiko'yam lokavyavahāraḥ.

7. *asya anartha heto prahaṇāya ātmaikatva-vidyā-pratipattaye sarve vedāntā ārabhyante. yathā ca ayamarthaḥ sarveṣāṁ vedāntānāṁ tathā vayam asyāṁ śarīraka-mīmāṁsayāṁ pradarśayiṣyāmaḥ.*
8. *jñānena hi pramāṇena avagatum iṣṭam brahma. brahmāvagati tarhi puruṣārthaḥ, niḥśeṣa-saṁsāra-bīja-avidyā-anartha nirbahaṇāt, Bhāṣya,* 1.1.1.
9. *Note*: All Vedic knowledge is regarded as a refuge from fear. In the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (1.4.2) we read: "Verily the gods when they were afraid of death entered the three-fold knowledge (i.e., the three Vedas) for refuge. They covered themselves with the Hymns (*chandobhir achādayan*); because they covered themselves with these, therefore these are called *chandas* (*chandasāṁ chandas*)." Ancient etymology refers to the origin of this word as *chad*, to cover. See Śankara's *Gītā Bhāṣya* 15.1. This is carried forward as mastery of the whole circumstance of fear by Pūrva-Mīmāṁsā, and as total fearlessness (*abhayam*) consequent on gnosis by Vedānta. Other traditions like Buddhism have advanced other kinds of knowledge for the same fearlessness.
10. *Note*: Gnosis too has its own kind of heroism in its epic. Śankara puts it in terms of the rite (also called *pravṛtti*) but calls it by the name *nivṛtti* (non-rite) which constrasts with the former in meaning. It has its own corresponding life-style, i.e., *saṁnyāsa*, or the estate of the renunciant, which is a *ritual* – of existence – without the rite.
11. Tilak's *Gītārahasya* may be viewed as a latter-day attempt to put the *Gītā* back into the framework of the epic of the rite, with modernistic, political overtones.
12. *Note*: the word *tarka* is used here in its fundamental sense and not to be taken in the sense of *tarka*, the 8th of the 16 principles, or *padārthas*, of the *Nyāya Sūtra.*
13. The *Nyāya Sūtra* of Gotama, the basic text of the Nyāya system, outside Vedānta though it is, declares at 1.1.5, that *anumāna* which is three-fold springs from *pratyakṣa.*
14. *Āpastamba Dharma Sūtra*, II. 4.8.13; II. 6.14.13. (Cf. G. Buhler's translation in *Sacred Laws* in *Sacred Books of the East Series. Note*: Many Mīmāṁsā works retain *nyāya* in their title. Jaimini's *Nyāya-māla-vistāra*, a celebrated work, designates all the theses it propounds as *nyāyas.* The appropriation of the word by the Nyāya system of Gotama clearly has created a confusion.
15. III. 2.122.
16. *na dharma jijñāsāyām-iva śrutyādaya eva pramāṇaṁ bramajijñāsāyām. kiṁtu śrutyādayo'nubhavādayaśca yathā sambhavam iha pramāṇam. anubhava-avasānatvāt bhūta-vastu viṣayatvāt ca brahmajñānasya. kartavyehi-viṣaye na anubhava-apekṣā asti iti śrutyādīnām eva prāmāṇyaṁ syāt*

sarvārthavadyotinaḥ-sarvajña-kalpasya yoni kāraṇaṁ brahma. na hi īdṛśasya śāstrasya ṛgvedādi-lakṣanasya sarvaguṇānvitasya sarvajñāt-anyataḥ sambhavo'sti. yad-yad-vistārārthaṁ śāstraṁ yasmāt puruṣa-

viśeṣāt sambhavati, yathā vyākaraṇādi pāṇinyādir-jñeyaikadeśārtham api, sa tato'pyadhikara-vijñāna iti prasiddhaṁ loke. kimu vaktavyamaneka-śākhā-bheda-bhinnasya tasya devatiryaṁ-manuṣya-varṇāśramādi-pravibhāga-hetor ṛgvedādyākhyasya sarva jñānākārasya aprayatnenaiva līlānyāyena puruṣaniḥśvasāvad-yasmān-mahato bhūtādyoneḥ sambhavaḥ, "asya mahato bhūtasya niḥśvasitam etad yad ṛgvedaḥ" (Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, 2.4.10) *ityādiśruteh. tasya mahato bhūtasya niratiśayaṁ sarvajñatvam sarvaśaktimatvaṁ ca iti. atha vā yathoktaṁ ṛgvedādi-śāstram yoni kāraṇaṁ, prāmaṇam asya brahmaṇo yathāvat-svarūpādhigame. śāstrādeva pramāṇāt-jagato janmādi-kāraṇaṁ brahmādhigamyata ityabhiprāyaḥ, Bhāṣya,* 1.1.3.

18. *tad brahma sarvajñaṁ sarvasakti jagadutpatti-sthiti-laya kāranaṁ vedānta-sāstrād eva avagamyate, katham? "samanvayāt". sarveṣu hi vedānteṣu vākyāni tātparyeṇaiva tasya arthasya pratipādakatvena samugatāni. "sadeva saumya idam agra āsīd, ekam evādvitīyam" (Chāndogya Upaniṣad,* 6.2.1); *"ātmā vā idam ekam eva agra āsīd" (Aitareya Upaniṣad,* 1.1.1); *"tad etat brahma apūrvam anaparam anantraam abāhyam. ayam ātmā brahma sarvānubhūh" (Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad,* 2.5.19); *"brahma eva idam amṛtam purastāt" (Mund. Upaniṣad,* 2.2.12); *ityādīni. na ca tadgatānāṁ padānāṁ brahma svarūpa viṣaye niścite samanvaye'vagamyamāne'rthāntara-kalpanā yukta, Bhāsya,* 1.1.4.

19. *na ca teṣāṁ-kartṛ-svarūpa-pradipādana-paratā-vasīyate. "tat-kena kaṁ paśyet" (Bṛh.,* 2.4.14). *ityādi-kriyā-kāraka-phala-nirākaraṇa-śrute. na ca pariniṣṭa-vastu svarūpatve'pi pratyakṣādi-viṣayatvam brahmaṇaḥ "tat-tvam asi" (Chānd.,* 6.8.16) *iti brahmātma bhāvasya śāstram-antareṇa-anavagamyamānatvāt. yattu heyopādeya-rahitatvād-upadeśānarthakyamiti naiṣa doṣa. heyopādeya-śūnya-brahmātmāvagatamādeva sarvakleśa prahaṇāt puruṣārtha-siddheḥ devatādi-pratipādanasya tu svavākyagatopāsanārthatve'pi na kaścid-virodhaḥ. na tu tathā brahmaṇa upāsana-vidhiśeṣatvam sambhavati. ekatve heyopādeya-śūnyatayā kriyā-kārakādi dvaita vijñānopamardo-papatteḥ, op. cit.*

20. Padmapada, one of the four disciples of Śankara wrote a commentary called *Pañcapādika*, on the first four *sūtras*, reputedly at the master's own behest, and it is the start of a whole commentarial line known by the name *Vivaraṇa*, taking its name from the commentary on it, namely, the *pañcapādika-vivaraṇa*, by *Prakāśātman*. This last work again, gave rise to a chain of works by a whole succession of commentators, the *Pañcapādika-vivaraṇa-prakāśikā*, by Nṛsimhāśrama; the *Vivaraṇa-prameya-saṁgraha* by Vidyāranya; and so on.

21. *evam tāvad vedānta vākyānāṁ brahmātmāvagatiprayojanānāṁ brahmātmani tātparyeṇa samanvitānām antareṇāpi kāryānupraveśaṁ brahmaṇi paryāvasānam uktam. brahma ca sarvajñaṁ sarvaśakti jagadutpatti-sthiti-nāśakāraṇam iti uktam. sāṁkhyādayastu pariniṣṭhaṁ vastu pramāṇāntara-gamyam eva iti manyamānāḥ pradhānādīni kāraṇānāntarāṇi anumimānāḥ tatparatayaiva vedānta-vakyāni yojayanti, Bhāṣya,* 1.1.4.

22. Cf. *Bhāṣya.*, 1.4.28.

23. *na sāṁkhya-parikalpitam acetanaṁ pradhānaṁ jagadaḥ kāraṇaṁ śakyaṁ vedānteṣu āśrayitum. aśabdaṁ hi tat. katham aśabdatvam? īkṣateḥ-*

īkṣitṛtva-śravaṇāt kāraṇasya. katham? evam hi śrūyate: "sadeva saumya idaṁ agra āsīt ekam eva advitīyam" ityupakramya; tad aikṣata bahusyāṁ prajāyeti. tat tejo asṛjata, Bhāṣya, 1.1.5.

24. *asatyapi karmaṇi savitā prakāśa iti kartṛtva vyapadeśadarśanāt. evam asatya api jñāna karmaṇi brahmaṇaḥ 'tadaikṣata' iti kartṛtva-vyapadeśopapatter na vaiṣamyam, Bhāṣya,* 1.1.5.

25. *yadi ca ajñasya sato mumukṣoḥ acetanam-anātmānam ātmeti upadiśet pramāṇabhūtaṁ śāstraṁ sa śraddadhānatayān-ghago-langūla-nyāyena tadātmadṛṣṭiṁ na parityajet, tadhā puruṣārthāt vihanyeta, anarthaṁ carcet, Bhāṣya,* 1.1.7.

26. *Sāṁkhya-Kārikā* (62) runs as follows: [Hence] there is no being bound, none freed and none in the transmigratory cycle; only *Pradhāna* in manifold conditions is bound, freed and in transmigration, *tasmān na badhyate'ddhā na mucyate nāpi saṁsarati kaścit saṁsarati badhyati mucyati ca nānāśrayā prakṛtiḥ*).

27. *yathā arundhatīṁ didarśayiṣuḥ tat samīpasthāṁ sthūlaṁ tārām amukhyāṁ pradhamam arundhatī iti grāhayitvā tāṁ pratyākhyāya paścāt arundhatīm eva grāhayati, tadvat na ayam ātmā iti brūyāt. na caivam avocat, Bhāṣya,* 1.1.8.

28. *Prathame pāde "janmādyasya yataḥ" ityākāśāde samastasya jagato janmādi-kāraṇaṁ brahmeti uktam. tasya samastha jagat-kāraṇasya brahmaṇo vyāpitvam, nityatvam, sarvajñatvam, sarvaśaktitvaṁ sarvātmakatvam ityevaṁ jātīyakā dharmā uktā eva bhavanti. arthāntara-prasiddhānāṁ ca keṣāṁcit śabdānām brahma-viṣayatva hetu-pradipādanena kānicid-vākyāni spaṣṭa-lingāni saṁdihyamānāni brahma-paratayā nirṇitāni, Bhāṣya,* 1.2.1.

29. *yade tat-asmīn-vakye dyauḥ pṛthivī antarīkṣaṁ manaḥ prāṇā ityevam-ātmakaṁ jagadotatvena nirdiṣṭam, tasyāyatanaṁ paraṁ brahma bhavitum arhati. kutaḥ? svaśabdāt ātmaśabdād iti arthaḥ. ātmaśabdo hi iha bhavati: "tamevaikaṁ jānatha ātmānam" iti. ātmaśabdaśca paramātma parigrahe samyagavakalpate nārthāntara parigrahe. kvacinca svaśabdena-iva brahmaṇa āyatanatvaṁ śrūyate: sanmūlāḥ saumya imāḥ sarvāḥ prajāḥ sadāyatanāḥ sadpratiṣṭhāḥ. Bhāṣya,* 1.3.1.

30. *brahma-jijñāsām pratijñāya brahmaṇo lakṣaṇam-uktam "janmādyasya yataḥ" iti. tallakṣaṇaṁ pradhānasya api samānam-ityāśaṁka tadaśabdatvena nirākṛtam: "īkṣater na aśabdam" iti. gatisāmanyaṁ ca vedānta-vākyānāṁ brahma-kāraṇa-vādaṁ pratividyate na pradhāna-kārana-vādaṁ pratīti prapañcitaṁ gatena grandhena. idaṁtu idāmīm avaśiṣtam āśaṁkyate. yaduktaṁ pradhānasya aśabdatvam. tadasiddham. kāsucit śākhāsu pradhāna-samarpaṇābhāsānāṁ śabdānāṁ śrūyamāṇatvāt, Bhāṣya,* 1.4.1.

31. *tasmāt na pradhānasya atra jñeyatvam avyakta-śabda nirdiṣṭatvam vā, Bhāṣya,* 1.4.5.

32. *Bhāṣya,* 1.4.3.

33. *avidyātmikāhi bījaśaktir-avyaktaśakti-nirdeśyā parameśvarāśrayā māyāmayī mahāsuṣuptiḥ. yasyāṁ svarūpa-pratibodha-rahitāḥ śerate saṁsariṇo jīvāḥ. Op.cit., Bhāṣya,* 2.1.14.

34. *sarvajñsya īśvarasya ātmabhūta iva avidyā-kalpite nama-rūpe tattvānyatvābhyām anirvacanīye saṁsāra-prapañca-bijabhūte sarvajñasya īśvarasya*

māyā-śakti-prakṛtir-iti, Bhāṣya, 2.1.14.

35. *yasmāt nirāgamāḥ puruṣotprekṣa-mātrā-nibandhānas-tarkā apratiṣṭhitā bhavanti. utpreksāyā niraṁkuśavtvāt. yathāhi kaiścit-abhiyuktair-yatnenotprekṣitās-tarkā abhiyuktatarair-anyair-ābhāsamāna dṛsyante, tairapi utprekṣitāh santaḥ tatoranyair-ābhāsyanta iti na pratiṣṭhitatvaṁ tārkāṇāṁ śakyaṁ samāśrayitum. puruṣamati vairūpyāt...ayam-eva ca tarkasya alamkāro yadapratiṣṭhitatvaṁ nāma. evaṁ hi sāvadya tarka parityāgena niravadyas tarka pratipattavyo bhavati. na hi pūrvajo mūḍha āsīdityātmanāpi mūḍhena bhavitavyam iti kimcid-asti pramāṇam. tasmāt na tarka-pratiṣṭhānaṁ doṣa iti cet evaṁ api avimokṣa-prasangaḥ. yadyapi kvacid-viṣaye tarkasya pratiṣṭhitatvam upalakṣyate, tathā'pi prakṛte tāvad-viṣaye prasajyata eva apratiṣṭhitatva-doṣāt-anirmokṣas-tarkasya. na hi idam atigambhīraṁ bhāvayāthātmyaṁ muktinibandhanaṁ āgamam-antareṇa utprekṣitum api śakyaṁ. rūpādya bhāvāddhi na ayam arthaḥ pratyakṣasya gocaraḥ, lingādyabhāvāñca na anumānādīnām iti ca uvācā-ma. api ca samyag-jñānān moksa iti sarveṣām mokṣa-vādinām abhyupa-gamaḥ. tañca saṁyag-jñānam eka-rūpam. vastu-tantratvāt. eka-rūpena hi avasthito yo'rthaḥ sa paramārtho loke. tadviṣayaṁ jñānaṁ saṁyag-jñānam iti ucyate. yathā agni rupeṇa iti. tatraivaṁ sati saṁyag jñāne puruṣāṇāṁ vipratipattir-anupapannā. tarkajñānānāṁ tu anyonya-virodhātma prasiddhā vipratipattiḥ. yaddhi kenacid-tārkikeṇedam eva saṁyag-jñānam iti pratipāditam, tadapareṇa vyutthāpyate tenāpi pratiṣṭhāpitaṁ tato'pareṇa vyutthāpyata iti prasiddhaṁ loke. katham ekarūpānavisthita-viṣayaṁ tarka-prabhavaṁ saṁyag-jñānaṁ bhavet, Bhāṣya*, 2.1.11.

36. *ataḥ siddham-asya-eva upaniṣadasya jñānasya saṁyag-jñānatvam, ato'nyatra saṁyag-jñānatvānupapattes-saṁsārāvimokṣa eva prasajyeta. ata āgama-vaśena-āgamānusāri-tarka-vaśena ca cetanaṁ brahma jagataḥ kāraṇaṁ prakṛtiśceti sthitam, loc.cit.*

37. On *epistēmē* and *epistamenos* see Heidegger, *What is Philosophy?* p. 57.

38. *tatra ca jīva vyatiriktāni tattvāni jivopakaraṇāni brahmaṇo jāyanta ityuktam.*

39. *atha avidyādhyasto brahmaṇi-ekasminn-ayaṁ prapañco'vidyayā pra-vilāpyata iti brūyāt, brahma-eva-avidyādhyasta-prapañca-pratyākhyānenā-veditavyam "ekam evādvitīyam brahma", "tatsatyaṁ sa ātmā tattvamasi" iti. evam āvedite tasmin vidyā svayam evotpadyate. tathā ca avidyā bādhyate, Bhāṣya*, 3.2.21.

40. Repeated again under 3.2.21 from 1.1.4.

41. For instance, 3.4.26.

42. For instance, 3.4.14; 3.4.27, etc.

43. See 3.4.27.